

DAVID G. BROWN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: January 28, 2003

Copyright 2006 ADST

Q: Today is the 28th of January 2003. This is an interview with David G. Brown. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you go by Dave, David or?

BROWN: I prefer Dave.

Q: Dave?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: All right. Let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and a little about your family?

BROWN: I was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1940. My father's family is from Cincinnati, Ohio and my mother is from Providence, Rhode Island. My father worked for Proctor & Gamble, in sales, and we spent most of my first ten years moving around New England and New Jersey. Then he got an offer to go as Director of Sales for Proctor & Gamble in the Philippines. Living in Manila was what started my interest in international affairs.

Q: Okay, well, let me go back first. What was your father's background as far as schooling and where the family came from and all that?

BROWN: He grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio and went to college in the east, at Princeton. After graduation, he went to work for Proctor & Gamble, which happened to be the company that his father had worked for.

Q: Proctor & Gamble is really a major institution. People I've talked to others, they retain their people sort of like it was a family, not a family, but a business that people sort of settled into comfortably.

BROWN: Right. My grandfather had worked for one company through his business life, and my father worked for the same company until he retired about 1970.

Q: What about your mother? What was her background and where was she born?

BROWN: She grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, the daughter of a lawyer and his second wife. There was a large gap in their ages, and my mother was brought up primarily by my grandmother after my grandfather's death. She went through what one might call a finishing school and attended what is now National Cathedral School, before becoming a secretary. A mutual friend introduced her to my father, and after a short courtship they were married. Throughout their married life, she was focused on her family. After my father passed away when she was about 60, she blossomed into her own.

Q: What was she doing?

BROWN: She became interested in writing and eventually wrote a book entitled Memories about her life. She took up genealogy, edited a genealogical quarterly and produced a second book on her family's genealogy.

Q: Do you recall anything about sort of your early education before you went to the Philippines, schools you went to?

BROWN: I attended public schools in the states and then international schools while abroad.

Q: Well, it's rather difficult in a way. You were always the new kid on the block since you moved around.

BROWN: We moved about every year and a half. Yes.

Q: How about during this time did you develop into a reader or sports or what sort of things?

BROWN: I certainly was not a great athlete. I was sort of a scrawny kid. Nor was I a particularly good student. My most difficult year was the first year in the Philippines when I was in the fourth grade. My promotion to fifth was conditional on my attending summer school. Later when I failed admission to U.S. prep schools, I had a catharsis that motivated me to become a more serious student. That happened when I was 16, and was living in Canada after leaving the Philippines.

Q: Well, tell me about the Philippines. You were there; this would be 1950 or so?

BROWN: We arrived in the summer of 1950 and left in the summer of 1952.

Q: What do you recall about the Philippines?

BROWN: Not a great deal. I do remember reading about the Korean War. The mental picture I have of myself is of a kid lying on the floor with newspapers and circling words that I didn't know in the newspaper stories about the Korean War and going to the dictionary and looking them up. We lived in a compound with walls around it, and I went to the Manila American School. Honestly speaking, my life revolved around the school and the country club. There is not much other than this memory of reading about the Korean War. Did I remember later that the Chinese got into the fight at that time? No, I have no recollection of that. I was not seriously interested in international affairs. I was not reading, as I do now, avidly about Americans who were involved in foreign policy. That came later.

Q: Well, then, where did you go when you came back?

BROWN: My dad got transferred to Canada, and we moved to Toronto. I was put into what you might call a British boarding school. I stayed in that school until I graduated in 1959. By that time, my dad had moved on to Venezuela. It was then that I failed to get into American prep schools.

Q: What school was this?

BROWN: This was a school called Upper Canada College located in downtown Toronto.

Q: How did you find it, I mean, the education system and how did you fit in?

BROWN: Well, the trauma of becoming a boarding student in an unfamiliar environment was not a very pleasant one for me. I had some difficulty as a foreigner being accepted into a group of kids who had known each other for a long time and were part of Toronto elite society.

Q: Well, did you find the Canadian viewpoint, you know, in more or less retrospect a different one than you were getting from history and all that?

BROWN: The Canadian education system at that time was based upon provincial level examinations. The whole focus was on doing well in those examinations. It was not an educational system that encouraged you to think. It was an educational system that pushed you to learn things so you could pass the examinations. It wasn't until I got back into the American educational environment, I also went to Princeton, that I found myself pushed to think and have a different point of view. Of course, we studied Canadian history, most of which I have forgotten. I would say one thing that I got from my Canadian education that was of real benefit was learning to write concisely. Writing précis was a standard part of English in this school system and in the exams. You would be given a paragraph say with 500 words in it and be told to boil it down to 250 words without losing any of the content or meaning. I think this really helped my writing skills.

Q: Oh, yes, it would be particularly useful for a career in the Foreign Service. Well, was there any doubt in your mind that you were going to Princeton or was this on the?

BROWN: Worry, yes. I had become a more serious student and since in those days my memory was pretty good, I could do the memorizing. I had studied Latin, which was largely memorization. I could figure out the grammar of Spanish and French. I did a lot of math and science in high school, other subjects which one could concentrate on and get good grades if you worked at it. I got into Princeton and immediately dropped my interest in math and science and went in a totally different direction.

Q: You were at Princeton from '50?

BROWN: '59 to '64.

Q: '59 to '64. What was the situation, was it still the eating clubs situation there or not?

BROWN: Yes. The clubs were more important then than now. I had a very unusual experience there because I got married at the end of my sophomore year. So I lived off campus and could not afford to join eating clubs. That really cut me off from a lot of campus life that I might have participated in otherwise. I got into a club, but couldn't afford to pay the bills and never really participated.

Q: At Princeton, what areas did you sort of concentrate on?

BROWN: There's an interesting story there, which I do remember. In the spring of 1959 when I was accepted to Princeton, I was sent forms asking me to sign up for fall semester classes. At that time, I had just finished reading the book, *The Ugly American*. That book sparked my interest in international affairs and a diplomatic career. Going through the catalog, I noticed that Princeton taught Chinese. So I wrote down Chinese, sent the class registration form to Princeton, and then went off for the summer. That summer I was working at a camp for handicapped children north of Toronto in the lake area, and I didn't give a thought to Princeton for almost the whole summer. In September, I arrived at Princeton and was handed the registration card on which there was, in handwriting that looked remarkably like my own, the word "Chinese." Did I really want to do this, I asked myself?

I then went and talked to Fritz Mote who was a professor of what Princeton called Oriental Studies. He said, well, you took Spanish when you were in high school. You got pretty far along with it. Here's what I recommend. Take the one class in Spanish you need to meet the language requirement. But also try Chinese out for the first semester. If you like it, you can continue. That's exactly what I did. It wasn't so much that I loved Chinese. It was that the professors in the program were really attentive to their students and cared. So, I stuck with Chinese, and Fritz Mote arranged for me to get a scholarship at the end of my junior year to go to Taiwan for a year abroad. I went. Not only was I married at that point, but also I had a young son who was three months old. The \$3,000 scholarship allowed us to fly to San Francisco and get on a boat and sail to Taiwan, spend a year there learning Chinese on my own and doing research on the thesis I had to write.

Q: When you got to Princeton, were you, I'm always curious about people who come out of this era, were you caught up in sort of the Kennedy phenomenon?

BROWN: Absolutely.

Q: Could you talk about that a little bit?

BROWN: I was not intensely involved in politics, but I remember very much being back in the United States after having spent a considerable amount of time overseas and following the Kennedy-Nixon debates and seeing Kennedy give his inaugural address. It was exciting and inspiring. In the context of having read the Ugly American book, I was high on the idea that I would learn about other countries, study the language and dig deep in to their societies and pursue a career in public service in response to the call that Kennedy was making. Interestingly, this was also the period when I read and was deeply impressed by Douglas MacArthur's farewell address at West Point. His speech about duty, honor and country. So two very different individuals were each inspiring me to public service. In fact, I took the Foreign Service exam one week after Kennedy was assassinated and fortunately just slipped through the cracks of getting into the Foreign Service. Nonetheless, there was no doubt in my mind at that point that this was what I wanted to do.

Q: Let's talk a bit about your, it's quite unusual for someone getting married when they're in college, particularly in those days. Where did you meet your wife and what was her background?

BROWN: Well, I met her in Venezuela during the holidays that I spent with my family. She was the daughter of an Exxon executive working in Caracas at that time. She had been born in Massachusetts and was going to Dana Hall School outside Boston.

Q: One of the top ones.

BROWN: Right. Anyways, we pursued our courtship at some distance, but I would frequently hitchhike to Boston to see her and she would occasionally come down to Princeton. We decided to get married.

Q: Did the authorities give you any problem on this?

BROWN: No. Both of our parents were a little resistant, but were understanding and let it go forward. In the end this marriage did not last.

Q: At Princeton were you getting any other courses in international relations and that sort of thing?

BROWN: A little bit of economics. I took a lot of courses on East Asia. My final year after I had completed all the course requirements, I took a lot of history. I took a course on the American Civil War. I took a course on Russian history and on British history and all of that was partly by inclination because I was by that time finding that I really enjoyed history.

Q: Now, on the Taiwan side, what did they do? Was there a structured course or did they dump you in Taiwan and it was up to you or what?

BROWN: That was the first year that Princeton had sent students to Taiwan. Two of us went. For my colleague and I, the only requirements was that we be in Taiwan, that we devote ourselves in some fashion to studying Chinese and Chinese society and, when we came back, that we would make recommendations on what future students should do. The latter was really very easy because the year that I was there, which was 1962-3, was the year that Stanford University organized the Stanford Center which was an inter-university program operated on National Taiwan University campus. My colleague and I did not have a structured program. We got introductions to some people who would help us. I tried to audit courses at National Taiwan University but found out that my language was not adequate. Therefore, I fell back on a pattern of doing tutoring with a professor and pursuing my thesis research.

Q: What was that?

BROWN: The thesis was about a man, Hu Shih, who you've probably heard of. He was a liberal intellectual in China who participated in the May 4th movement. Hu also served under Chiang Kai-shek as a government official including as ambassador to the United States. When the nationalists retreated to Taiwan, Hu was involved in setting up an intellectual journal of contemporary affairs. One of Hu's colleagues in this was a man named Lei Chen. Lei decided to go a step further and organize a political party in opposition to the nationalists. When he did that the government cracked down and threw him in jail on trumped up charges. This had happened two years before I went to Taiwan. What I tried to do was to write a thesis to understand why Hu Shih had chosen not to come to his colleague's defense. So, I spent a lot of time reading Hu's writings.

Q: Had he died by this time?

BROWN: Yes, Hu had passed away. I did interview some people who knew him. I was really green, and I did not have anyone in Taiwan who was helping me. Censorship was heavy, and the subject was one that was very difficult to discuss with Chinese. I could have gotten myself thrown out of the country.

Q: A naive kid wandering around asking about somebody who was associated with dissidents.

BROWN: So, it's probably fortunate that I spent more of my time in the library at Academia Sinica. This was only possible because of connections that the university had set up for me. I was able to go out to Academia Sinica, use their files and read everything that was in the press at the time and research the laws that were in place. It is fascinating now because Chen Shui-bian, the current President of Taiwan, has just released a study about Lei Chen's arrest. It sheds light on things that were hidden at that time.

Q: But looking at this figure, did this give you, I mean, granted you're really green on this whole thing, but did it sort of open up a slight window on to Chinese political life and all that?

BROWN: Oh, yes.

Q: How things worked and all that?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Did you have any old mentor or something you could go to and say, "What's this all about?"

BROWN: I didn't have anyone like that when I was in Taiwan. On my return, Prof. Mote was my mentor. He worked with me on that thesis. I have a recollection that also maybe the other person who was helping was Marius Jansen, who was a Japan specialist. He has a very keen analytical mind and he helped quite a bit.

Q: How did you find living there? I mean, was this a society, what sort of society did you find this living in Taiwan at that time?

BROWN: One strong impression was the extent to which the society was still wrapped up in Chiang's goal of returning to the mainland. The visuals were something that you associate now with a communist country. Billboards and placards and statues extolling Chiang. Yet, I never had any sense that I was being followed or harassed.

Another one of the visuals was that there still were pillboxes at main intersections, creating an image that if there was ever any unrest; soldiers were going to be ready to gun down the populace. In one sense it was rather comical because the pillboxes were often painted with slogans. Everyday life was pretty good; life seemed to be improving. This was the beginning of Taiwan's economic miracle. We lived in a Japanese style house with almost no heating. Bought almost everything off the local market. I survived economically because my dad had worked out with the local representative of the American President Line for me to exchange my dollars and get local currency, the New Taiwan Dollar, at about two and a half times the official exchange rate. That's what allowed me to stretch my modest fellowship and support my family for ten months.

Q: Was there a feeling because this was not that long after the Taiwan Strait crisis and all. Was there a concern of Mainland China jumping on Taiwan or Taiwan jumping on Mainland China? Was this sort of an issue that was around?

BROWN: I will have to say that I don't recall thinking or worrying about that.

Q: Well, I mean it probably shows something. What about were you getting, was what was happening in Mainland China at all a topic?

BROWN: We would talk about it occasionally amongst American friends, but it wasn't something I spent time talking to people in Taiwan about.

Q: During this time you wanted to get involved with the Foreign Service and all that. Were you meeting any people at the embassy or getting any idea of what diplomats do?

BROWN: A very good question. Almost no contact, but two officers at the embassy were interested in keeping in touch with students. They were Stape Roy and Jay Taylor. They invited my colleague and me to dinner once. I have no recollection of what we talked about that night, but I was terribly impressed with these young men and that confirmed my interest in a Foreign Service career.

Q: While you were at Princeton or while you were on your own, were you ever able to read any books about what diplomats do in the American Foreign Service?

BROWN: A funny thing, I just didn't do that then.

Q: There was a man named Stuart I think did something called the Practice of Diplomacy or something like that from Stanford. I think it was the only book around. Well, back at Princeton you were going to graduate in '65?

BROWN: I am a member of the class of '63, but because of this extra year that I took to go to Taiwan. I graduated in 1964. During my senior year, my wife was going to the University of Pennsylvania. We lived in Philadelphia, and I commuted three days a week to Princeton. My time at the university was focused on getting class work done and getting back in the car for the drive home.

Q: It's interesting because people who've gone to Princeton for the most part seem to be from my experience a much tighter knit group.

BROWN: Oh, absolutely.

Q: I went to Williams and I just went and it was over, but the Princeton alumni are I mean.

BROWN: That's true. It's in part because of the club system, and how close friendships develop in those years. I missed out on that because of my marriage and getting separated from the people I normally would have graduated with and then in my final senior year I didn't live with classmates. It wasn't just that I was off campus, I was out of town.

Q: Out of town, yes. Well, then, when did you take the Foreign Service exam?

BROWN: It was in the end of November just about a week after Kennedy was assassinated.

Q: That would be '63, yes.

BROWN: Yes, 1963. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22nd.

Q: When did you take the oral exam?

BROWN: I took it in New York, sometime in the spring of 1964. I was offered an appointment in August 1964.

Q: But this was, now do you recall any questions that came during the oral exam?

BROWN: Well I remember one. Should we recognize "Red China?" I made what I thought was a terribly persuasive case for recognizing the PRC. The examiners had two comments about the exam. Sonny, you don't know very much about the United States. You've got to study it more. It wasn't quite that brusque, but almost. The other was that I had guts trying to get into the Foreign Service by making an argument for recognizing Beijing. Yet, apparently, I'd made the case persuasively and respectfully.

Q: Well, that's interesting. You know, I think there is a whole very solid body of opinion who calls it practically we should recognize the PRC. I remember I came in the Foreign Service in '55, but I always had that, it just seemed like a lot of people over there were talking to the Soviets, why not these, they had some other problems, but just how to deal with this government.

BROWN: Under Kennedy, there were people, Roger Hilsman and others, who were advocating improving relations with Beijing. We would have gone farther at that time if the Cultural Revolution hadn't intervened, but that's a different story.

Q: I heard somebody tell the story that when Eisenhower talked to Kennedy just before the inauguration he said, "I'll give you support on a lot of things, but don't try to recognize China" I don't know if this makes sense. Kennedy was very cautious. He had won by a very small margin. So, you came in really right out of college.

BROWN: Though I was a bit older because in the Toronto education system, they have 13 years of high school and I'd done that and then I'd done the extra year in Taiwan. So, I was almost 24 when I joined the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you have any feeling that the oral exam may have pointed out that you missed something about being an American? You know, I mean American history or?

BROWN: Well, this was pointed out to me, but no, I didn't have any sense I was missing something. I was really focused on trying to understand foreign countries, particularly China and Taiwan.

Q: How did you find your language was by the time you graduated?

BROWN: When I came in I was tested I think at the 2/2+ and my first assignment was to Taipei. The Department said I didn't need language training. I was told to study on my own.

Q: First, let's talk about your class. You came in '65?

BROWN: 1964.

Q: '64 I mean. What was your A100 course like?

BROWN: I recall learning an awful lot of things about how government works. I was a tabula rasa on the practical aspects of government. We had to do a research paper, and I did mine on Thailand.

Q: Then your first assignment was to Taiwan?

BROWN: Right.

Q: As what?

BROWN: If you remember the Service in those days, there were rotational junior officer positions

Q: Yes.

BROWN: My first six months was in the economic section. I was the assistant commercial officer working for a wonderful avuncular man named Ollie Bongard, the Commercial Counselor. I guess my greatest accomplishment at that time was to launch a Chinese language commercial newsletter working with the Chinese on the stuff at the embassy. So, I was really digging into that subject matter. It was a great deal of fun finding out how one prints with a Chinese typewriter, interviewing people about how they liked the newsletter. It was mimeographed, a very simple production. Then I did a stint, which was supposed to be six months, but ended up being nine or ten, in the consular section wrestling with the question of student visas. Dick Hart, the section chief, was another mentor who took me under his wing.

Q: What was sort of the attitude of dealing with at that particular point, anybody who got a degree and came to the United States as a student would probably dig in. Now, it's quite a different matter. There's much more backwards and forwards.

BROWN: We were having maybe 5% or 10% of students come back when their education was finished. It was not a very satisfactory situation.

Q: What about, first of all, who was the ambassador?

BROWN: At the beginning, it was Adm. Wright. I recall he left soon after my arrival.

Q: I'm just looking in the, Wright, Gerald Wright, yes. He was an admiral.

BROWN: What were his years?

Q: Gerald Wright was there from '63 to '65.

BROWN: Okay. I arrived in '65 and then there was a gap and I think the next man was Kirk.

Q: No, Walter McConaughy.

BROWN: Walter McConaughy. Anyway, there was a long gap. My current colleague, Ralph Clough, was the DCM and charge then.

Q: What was sort of the attitude, I mean, you're the junior officer there and it always ends up I gather because of my experience, a clique of junior officers, you know, who sit around and talk over tea or beer or whatever it is. What was the attitude towards Chiang in Taiwan in those days?

BROWN: Disrespectful I would say. He wasn't in senility at this point, but he was in declining health and the whole idea that he was going to lead them back to the mainland was obviously a charade. The focus of people's attention then was Chiang Ching-kuo. Given his mixed background, what was he likely to be? It was clear that he was going to take over from his father. I'm trying to remember, in 1965 or '66, Ching-kuo was, I think, Vice Minister of Defense.

Q: He had also come out of the sort of the enforcement side.

BROWN: Absolutely. He had a very dark image at that point.

Q: Did you get any feel for being a China hand at this point? Were there China hands around and were you sort of?

BROWN: Well, I certainly thought I was part of a group of people who had made a commitment to studying and knowing about China, yes.

Q: How about studying on the side?

BROWN: I worked at it pretty hard. I guess one of the highlights of my time there was joining the Junior Chamber of Commerce. I spent a lot of time with them and used them as a network to get to know people around the island. The Jaycees was a very well developed organization, and it was entirely in the hands of Chinese. There were a few foreigners in an organization of several hundred members on the island. There were three or four foreigners and one of my colleagues and I from the embassy were amongst those.

Q: Who was the colleague?

BROWN: Bob Littell. The Jaycees was a tremendous eye into Taiwan society. It allowed me to use my Chinese, as everything was done in Chinese. It was a tremendous help to my language, but it also was a window into what was taking place amongst younger upcoming people on the island. I had an opportunity to see an organization that had a lot of both mainlanders and Taiwanese in it. They were running for elections within this organization to get chosen for the leadership positions and how did they go about doing it. How did the networks that they developed work? To what extent were people reaching across the ethnic lines? This was still a period when Taiwan was very much split, not in terms of political organization because there weren't any opposition parties, but in terms of ethnic background. There was still a great deal of hostility towards the mainlanders.

Q: As you, well, even back to the time when you were a student there, this split, did you find that one tended to sort of get absorbed into the mainland thing at first or was there, could you bridge this gap?

BROWN: While a student, I did not get to know many young Chinese. My friends were other Americans and my contacts were older people at Academia Sinica and Taiwan University. I met some students, but not many. It shows the things I missed. I should have been actively involved with students, but I wasn't. I was young and much more bookish. Back in Taiwan a second time, I was older more mature and operating in an environment where people were engrossed in local politics. As I said, the Jaycees were a tremendous window for a young person like myself to take advantage of. I was 25, 26 and these people tended to be in their late '30s and '40s, but nevertheless I made a lot of friendships, some of which are still alive today.

Q: Well, did you find a curiosity on the part of the people in Taiwan from the professional class about who you were, where you were coming from and all that?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: What about at the embassy was the embassy absorbed by the mainlanders or was sort of the handwriting on the wall for everyone that you know, eventually the Taiwanese are going to take over and we better get ourselves positioned correctly?

BROWN: The mainlanders dominated government and many of ones contacts were with the bureaucracy. There was at that time an officer in the political section whose job it was to follow the opposition and that was Jay Taylor. He was one of four or five people in the political section. Everybody else was focused on working with either the Nationalist party or the government apparatus or the military, all of which at that time were dominated by mainlanders. There was just one person really in the whole embassy whose job it was to get to know the opposition, and he had to operate carefully. There were prominent opposition figures at that time. One that was talked about a great deal was Henry Kao, who had been elected mayor of Taipei City.

Q: Was the KMT or the nationalist government coming down heavily or were there any opposition?

BROWN: I won't say there was nothing, but there was not a great deal of opposition activity in this period. It was too dangerous. I don't know this so much from my recollections from that time, as from the study I have kept up since. I teach a course now on Taiwan. You had the Lei Chen case in 1960 as I said and then there was the arrest of Peng Ming-min and two students who were with him in late 1964. He was a professor at the National Taiwan University who was arrested just before my time at the Embassy. His case played out during my time. I can't remember any other serious arrests taking place during my tenure. It wasn't until the '70s that you began to have a resurgence of active opposition activity. What you had in my time there as I've said were some Taiwanese who would run in local elections against the KMT and occasionally win.

Q: Were the Taiwanese moving into the coming from the chamber of commerce, were they moving into the commercial side?

BROWN: Oh, absolutely. You could see this. Particularly outside Taipei, it was almost, the Jaycee organization was almost entirely Taiwanese outside of Taipei.

Q: Looking sort of back on this, but at the time is there such a thing as a Taiwanese, people from the island of Taiwan a way of operating that may be different from the mainlanders?

BROWN: Culturally there was little difference. I was quite impressed how strongly Chinese Taiwanese society was. If you go there today, there is a resurgence of interest in Taiwan culture, which hadn't really started at that time. It really began in the '70s. Now Taiwanese nationalists have a very clear concept of how their society is different from other Chinese societies. This is what social science calls an "imagined community." They draw on their past to suit political needs, but in terms of why are Taiwan businessmen so successful on the mainland in their investments, it is in part because they know how to operate in a Chinese environment. They know the language, they know the culture, they know how people act.

Q: When did the Cultural Revolution start?

BROWN: 1966. It was just starting as I left to go on to Vietnam.

Q: Was there any view that the Peoples' Republic was going to be something with whom we could do business or did you find with you and your colleagues did you feel that oh, when is that shoe going to drop?

BROWN: Yes, my recollection is that we talked about this a lot and that many of us thought something ought to be done to open contacts with Beijing. But we were just junior officers in the embassy, and in those days junior officers weren't let in on issues such as these that were handled by the Ambassador.

Q: What about, with the chamber of commerce or even as a consular officer and all, did you have much dealing with the bureaucracy at all?

BROWN: Yes, some. After my consular time was up I was transferred to the administrative section. There I got an unusual task to catalogue all the Chinese employees, foreign nationals contractors, residence staffs etc. This wasn't a counter intelligence issue, just a simple question of who was working for us, doing what in what capacity. The study turned up a surprising number of people employed officially to handle private work for senior officers. I endeared myself to my colleagues asking why taxpayer money was being used to hire gardeners to cut the lawns of all the officers in the political and administrative sections and why is it that the administrative counselor had more of these services? I was getting in trouble. So, I was moved out of that section pretty quickly.

Q: When did you finish up?

BROWN: I had hoped that my last rotation would be to the USIS office in southern Taiwan. I had traveled around the island and visited the south several times. There was a staffing gap in the USIS office in Tainan, the cultural center in the southern part of Taiwan. So, I made a pitch for not going to the political section, but spending my last six months as the branch public affairs officer in Tainan. I was told no; you should go to the political section. I think the Embassy was afraid that I was too green and too prone to do things on my own. So, it was safer to have me in the political section. I did that for about two months and then there was an appeal for people to go to Vietnam. I volunteered.

Q: Had Vietnam been a subject of conversation or discussion the island?

BROWN: Yes, but how? Here my memory fails me.

Q: What sort of was the motivation?

BROWN: Vietnam was becoming controversial. I thought it would be good to go where the action was. Was I for the war, was I against the war, was I going down there to find out what the truth was, you know.

Q: Well, as I look upon it my motivation for volunteering there in '68 or '69 was kind of this is where the action was and I wanted to see it. A sense of a little adventure and this was sort of the focus of all; I wanted to take a look at it.

BROWN: Was there an element that it would look better to volunteer rather than just being ordered to go there? There may have been something in that because just everybody was going one way or another.

Q: Well, you went to Vietnam; you were there from when to when?

BROWN: It was a direct transfer sometime in the summer of 1966 for an 18-month assignment. I extended it for a couple of months and left in August of 1968. I think it was June, maybe July, because I had to get start Japanese language training.

Q: When you arrived there in '66, what was the situation in South Vietnam?

BROWN: The war was not going well, and the Americans were getting more and more heavily involved in it, not just in a military sense, but in every aspect of Vietnamese life. I got assigned to the provincial reporting unit. I came with Chinese and there was a Chinese affairs officer position in the embassy, but that slot was filled. As I did not know Vietnamese, I was assigned to cover the II Corps highlands area where you could do more with French than elsewhere. As I had studied French in Canada years earlier, the Embassy arranged brush-up classes to bring my language up to the 2+ level. The II Corps highlands was where the Montagnards lived.

Q: Was that where you spent your time?

BROWN: I lived in Saigon and traveled every week to the highlands. We traveled by plane, small one or two engine planes. You would take off, fly over the jungle, crossing yourself all the time that the engine would keep going until you get where you're going.

Q: Let's talk about. Who were the Montagnards and what was the situation there?

BROWN: The Montagnards are aboriginal people. The name Montagnards was given to them by the French because they lived in the highlands along the western border with Laos and Cambodia. No one knew exactly how many there were, perhaps one million, divided into any number of tribes. The Vietnamese traditionally despised them. The French had had a policy of keeping the ethnic Vietnamese out of the highlands. This was not a magnanimous policy but one designed to reserve the area for coffee and tea plantations run by French planters. Since the French government was gone by then, there was a Vietnamese administrative structure in the towns and some Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese merchants. But the bulk of the population in this highland area was Montagnards. In the war, they were caught between the Republic of Vietnam with the U.S. on one side and the Viet Cong on the other side. Both sides were trying to recruit Montagnards because they were tough fighters who knew the terrain. The Montagnard economy and way of life were of course being disrupted by the war. Their economy was slash and burn agriculture.

While we're on Montagnards, let me mention one highlight of my work with them. In 1967 National Geographic did an article on the Montagnards. I helped the reporter and was surprised to find myself quoted in the lead paragraph of the piece. Nothing profound, just a quote about the Montagnards being caught between the government and the Viet Cong with their way of life in jeopardy.

The U.S. government goal was to persuade the Vietnamese government to abandon their cultural prejudices and adopt an enlightened policy that would attract the Montagnards to support the South Vietnamese government. That was a large part of what the embassy was trying to do in the highlands. There was a political movement among the Montagnards called by the French acronym, FULRO, for the United Front for the Liberation of the Oppressed Races. These were Montagnards who were trying to preserve their own culture and achieve autonomy from both the Viet Cong and the government. So, much of what we tried to do in that period was to convince the Vietnamese to be sensible enough that you could then encourage this FULRO movement to cooperate with the government against the North Vietnamese. It was a lot of fun for a young guy.

Q: How did you operate?

BROWN: I would take advantage of people who had some knowledge of and contact with the Montagnards. These were sometimes anthropologists, or AID officers working in AID's program of assistance to the Montagnards or sometimes Montagnards who were working in local administrations in the highlands. The Vietnamese had a Montagnard Commissariat, something like our Indian affairs bureaus. One of the anthropologists was Gerry Hickey who had the respect of these people because of his real interest in understanding their lifestyle. Speaking in practical terms, I would arrive by plane in a provincial town, borrow a vehicle from the local USAID office or the military and drive around to see local figures. I'd listen to what the military said about where it was safe to go. I would talk to French planters, to local officials, local businessmen and religious leaders. Occasionally, I would drive to a Montagnard village to meet tribal leaders who were known to be influential in the Montagnard community or have contacts with FULRO. I'd drink fermented rice wine through a long straw from a communal wine jug, being careful to stay sober so I could get back when the meeting was over. We then used some of these contacts to send messages to FULRO which was operating secretly out in the bush.

I worked with Ted Heavner who was the Deputy in the Political Section responsible for our dealings with the Montagnards. I can very much remember one time when we had set up a negotiation with the head of FULRO. Ted and I went by helicopter to a designated clearing in the jungle where we were met by a group of Montagnards. Ted went off with them into the bush for several hours while I was told to wait with the helicopter. I never got to do anything quite as dramatic as that myself. Now, apart from what we were doing, the U.S. Special Forces had a string of bases along the Vietnamese border and they hired a lot of the Montagnards.

Q: Well, back at the embassy, in the first place you were part of the political section?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Who was the head of the political section?

BROWN: At the beginning it was Phil Habib, then later Arch Calhoun.

Q: Yes. How did you find the political section? Were they, was it a diverse group?

BROWN: Yes, it was a diverse group. Were our attitudes diverse?

Q: Yes.

BROWN: I think the lower you got in the embassy the more you encountered a belief that our policy wasn't working. Our mandate in the Provincial Reporting Unit, ten officers at that time, came from Phil Habib, who told us to get out around the country and tell the ambassador what was really happening. I think certainly my perception at the time was that the U.S. government was so deeply involved that there was no longer a sense of responsibility on the part of many Vietnamese for what was happening to their own country. I arrived as we were building up toward the peak of the American military presence there. Over time I developed a conviction that the U.S. had to reduce its role and return more of the effort to the Vietnamese and make them responsible for their own future. I recall this view was widely shared. I remember Vice President Humphrey coming through and other people. Occasionally, such delegations would have an hour and a half discussion with the people in the Provincial Reporting Unit. A pretty standard message on our part was that more American troops wasn't what was going to win the war.

Q: How about the situation of the highlanders or the Montagnards? Did you find that this was a sort of a minor thing that you were reporting on or was this of concern at least from your perspective within the political section?

BROWN: Oh, yes, it was a serious concern because this was a strategically important part of Vietnam. It was not that the population was large but that the geography was strategically important. Therefore, getting the cooperation of the Montagnards was a pretty consistent goal. It wasn't just the Vietnamese who had to be persuaded to cooperate with the Montagnards. I remember at one point a new American general arrived, I can't remember his name, but he was moving his division into the highlands and wanted to burn down a section of the highlands to deny cover to the enemy. My colleagues in AID and I geared up a major effort to persuade the Embassy to persuade him not to do that.

Q: Well, I mean, as a practical matter, geographically, this is where the collapse of South Vietnam started up there in '75 I believe.

BROWN: You have a very good memory. That's exactly where it started. There was a big battle around Pleiku and the South Vietnamese were defeated. And in a matter of weeks, the north moved down the highways to the coast and from the coast all the way down into Saigon and that was the end.

Q: Yes. Did you get any feel about, granted you were pretty low on the feeding system, but about Elsworth Bunker, the ambassador?

BROWN: Well, I certainly have a sense of respect for him. How much influence did he have back in Washington? Again, my memory fails me as to what he thought. When I first arrived Henry Cabot Lodge was ambassador.

Q: Cabot Lodge. Did the sort of the changes in government in South Vietnam on the Vietnamese side have much effect in the highlands?

BROWN: I cannot remember specifics, but yes, President Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky were in power throughout my time in Vietnam. However, there was a mix of types on the Vietnamese side in the highlands. Some officials were more enlightened and realized Vietnam had to work with these people. Then there were others who you might describe as Neanderthal hardliners whose view of the highlanders was these are primitive people, they have no future. The future is for us Vietnamese to develop the highlands and if we have any trouble with the montagnards we're just going to shoot them and burn their villages.

Q: How about the Special Forces, they'd been there, did you find them a good source, I mean what was your impression of the Special Forces?

BROWN: Are they a source, did we use them as conduits? My recollection is that there were some Montagnards working for Special Forces who we knew had connections into the FULRO organization and could be used to send messages. However, the Special Forces were not really integrated into the embassy's political approach to this. What kind of respect did I have for these guys? A lot. They worked in very tough circumstances and very exposed and were doing their best. I wasn't a military guy. I didn't try and second guess their tactics of how to interdict Viet Cong operations along the border. I did listen very carefully to their advice about where to travel.

Q: How about the regular army units? Did you find this a different breed of cat or something?

BROWN: Well, I didn't have much to do with the GIs. My contacts tended to be with the Intel people and occasionally with the senior officers. We had different jobs. The intel people were focused on the Viet Cong units. My attention was on what's going on amongst the populations in these areas and what were their attitudes. What were their attitudes about the prospects for the war? What were their attitudes about the South Vietnamese government? Despite the general I mentioned before, generally, I found what I thought were very intelligent men leading our military. There was a General Lee, I can't remember what position he was in, but I remember him wanting to talk to me about the Cultural Revolution China and what this would mean for the prosecution of the war. In fact at one point, he sent word he wanted me to come and brief him. I was flattered.

Q: Well, then were you there for Tet?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me your experiences during Tet?

BROWN: Okay. There are two sides of this story. The first is just anecdotal. Before Tet 1968, within the Provincial Reporting Unit, we decided that one person in each corps area would be out in the field and one other would be back in Saigon. My II corps colleague, Jim Mack chose to spend Tet in Nhatrang, so I stayed in Saigon. If he had wanted to come to Saigon and I had chosen to go to someplace else, I would have gone to Ban Me Thuot. As it happened Ban Me Thuot was overrun by the Viet Cong, and local AID officers with whom I probably would have been staying were captured. Luck was with me. In Saigon, I and another officer, I think it was Allen Wendt, drew straws as to who would do duty in the embassy that night. Allen drew the duty, so I wasn't in the embassy building when it was attacked. I was living in an apartment building across the street from the embassy. It was a surreal experience. There were three of us, including Steve Johnson, Ulysses Johnson's son; living together in this apartment. Between the three of us, we had one weapon, which was my Montagnard crossbow. So, we were not inclined to go out and try to win whatever was going on outside. We called the embassy and the lines were dead. We couldn't get through to them or to Arch Calhoun or other people. We turned on the radio, Armed Forces Radio, which was running baseball games. Every now and then it got quiet, we'd poke our head out to try to see what was happening. All of a sudden there would be more staccato gunfire. Eventually it quieted down the next morning. What had happened was that about 30 Viet Cong had shot their way into the embassy compound and were in the garden area around the building having killed a couple of marines in the process. Fortunately, they did not get into the embassy building. Allen and the others inside survived. In the morning, a U.S. ranger battalion was brought into reoccupy the American Embassy. When we eventually went to work the next morning we were literally walking over dead Viet Cong bodies to get into the embassy.

The other side of the story is how to interpret Tet. Honestly, I can't remember what a report I would have written shortly after this would have said. My recollection is that I was focusing on what was going on in Vietnam. I didn't have a good understanding of what the impact of this event was back in the United States. There was sort of a division of opinion in my recollection between the people who were emphasizing what a shock this attack had represented and how close it came to succeeding and that therefore this was a harbinger for real trouble for the government and U.S. Then there were others, and I put myself in this category I will admit, were more impressed that this massive attack had been repulsed and that in large part by U.S. efforts we were able to recapture all the main cities that had been lost in about six weeks.

Q: What happened up in the highlands at Ban Me Thuot and other places?

BROWN: Not a great deal, but in Ban Me Thuot a number of people were captured, Americans because the Viet cong attacked the provincial headquarters and the AID offices and they captured some Americans, including Mike Bengé who was an AID employee and who had been with AID in the highlands for five or six years and was about as close to the Montagnard community as any AID employee. He was a prisoner until '75, broken by the experience.

Q: Did you go back to the highlands after Tet, didn't you?

BROWN: Oh, yes.

Q: Was there much effect there?

BROWN: No. You did not see this. The highlands had not been the focus of their attack. I mean they were attacking Saigon and Hue and Nhatrang and all the main cities. Tet was going to be a coup de grace, a knock out blow, and so the highlands was not a major focus.

Q: Well, you left relatively shortly thereafter, well in August, so I mean it was about six months?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: When you left Vietnam in 1968 what was your feeling, whither South Vietnam?

BROWN: Well, I will be honest, I thought a policy of gradually reducing the American presence and turning things over to the Vietnamese had a good chance of success. That proved to be wrong.

Q: I think a lot of us felt that way. Okay, well, we'll pick this up the next time in 1968 and you're off to Japanese language training.

BROWN: Right.

Q: It looks like you were a glutton for punishment.

This is tape two, side one with David Brown. Today is the 11th of February 2003. 1968, what caused you to go after Japanese training?

BROWN: I was a China hand.

Q: Yes?

BROWN: In those days we didn't have relations with China. Having been in Taiwan in a junior officer slot and in Vietnam, which was a very unique experience, I wanted to do something in normal diplomacy. You couldn't do that in Hong Kong. That was where you would go if you wanted to report on Mainland China from the outside. I'd been in Taipei so I decided do something different by going to Japan where the U.S. had diplomatic relations and where I could be in an embassy and gain experience in normal diplomatic work.

Q: Well, this raises a question. I've thought about this. We've had our China hands, but it became a very sort of a distant type of diplomacy. I mean essentially they were observing another country not having real diplomatic relations. I mean you had it with Taiwan, but other than that it was sort of like calling themselves political officers, but essentially everybody was an INR officer.

BROWN: That's exactly it. If you went to Hong Kong you were reading the press, reading interview reports of refugees, trying to pick up local newspapers from around China and read them and read between the lines so to speak to figure out what was going on in China. It was more of an intelligence analyst's job and I wanted to practice diplomacy.

Q: Did you have any problem you know with your China background and all getting yourself into the Japanese orbit?

BROWN: No, at that time when you'd done your service in Vietnam, the personnel system was trying their best to satisfy your interests. So, when I said I wanted to take Japanese language training, the request seemed to have been granted quite easily.

Q: Well, then, you took Japanese. How did it, describe Japanese language training, you started in 1968, how did that work?

BROWN: Well, students spent a year in Washington, not in this gorgeous campus that we have now, but in a building down in Rosslyn and you did a year of training there and then went to Yokohama. Some people went from one year of language into a consular job, but I got in the other track and was put through a second year of training in Yokohama and then went into the political section in Tokyo.

Q: So, essentially you're taking Japanese from '68 to '70?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: How did you find here in Washington, how did you take to Japanese training?

BROWN: Fine. I was happy to do it. It's a hard language to learn. It's got a very complicated grammar. It's got characters you have to learn. I had a leg up on the characters having studied Chinese.

Q: At Yokohama, the idea of course is to get you away from the embassy and everything. How did that work? Did you stay with a Japanese family?

BROWN: I was married and had a young son. My family lived with me. We went out on the Japanese economy and rented a Japanese style house with tatami mats and a tokunoma, which is a decorative alcove in a room where you put a flower vase and a hanging scroll. The house was a split personality in the sense that it was mostly Japanese but had a western style kitchen and dining table with chairs. We didn't have to eat every meal sitting on the tatami mats, Japanese style. It had a little garden in the back and it was a wonderful experience.

Q: How were the teachers?

BROWN: They were pleasant professional language teachers. It was a wonderful year, though a bit of a strain studying language day after day.

Q: Did your wife pick up Japanese?

BROWN: No, she did not. She did not take to Japan very well and that contributed in part to our divorce.

Q: Yes. It's really very difficult. You never know how these things will take.

BROWN: Absolutely.

Q: Well, from '70 to when did you?

BROWN: I spent three more years in Japan from the summer of '70 to the summer of '73 in Tokyo. All the time in what was called the external unit of the Political Section and my principal beat was to follow Japanese policy in Asia. The biggest part of that was Japan's relationship with China.

Q: Yes, of course an interesting time, too. Before we get to that, how would you describe Japanese American relations in 1970?

BROWN: They were reasonably good. We had been through the period of demonstrations against the U.S. Japan security treaty. That was in the past. We were in the process of, I wasn't involved in this, but we were in the process of negotiating what we called the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty and of course when that was accomplished in 1972 that was a hugely symbolic event representing America's respect for Japan and the fact that we were, you know, returning the territory to them. Relations were reasonably good. One bad aspect, that again I was not personally involved in, was the controversy over textile exports from Japan to the United States. Later, there were more serious problems caused by the so-called Nixon shocks. The first of those being over Kissinger's secret trip to China and the second one being the U.S. decision to go off the gold standard. Both of these steps were taken without prior consultation with a country that was deeply affected by the decision and a close ally to the United States.

Q: Was it you know, somebody trying to deal with the Japanese government. Was there kind of a I don't want to sound fictitious, a Japanese person you could talk to or if you wanted to deal with the Japanese government you found yourself sharing with a whole bunch of people. In other words you couldn't go up to the prime minister and say, look we're going to be recognizing China, but don't tell anyone?

BROWN: Well, first dealing with the Japanese government was quite favorable. Although I was a junior officer, my counterparts were officials with considerable influence on policy. The Foreign Ministry did control Japanese foreign policy. Within the Foreign Ministry, responsibility was delegated downward on most issues rather remarkably. An office director was tasked to come up with policy ideas and to lead a process of consultation within the Japanese government. His boss, the assistant secretary level person was then responsible for selling these policy ideas to the upper levels of the bureaucracy. The ministry's leadership worked hand in glove with the governing Liberal Democratic Party and would get the LDP's blessing, which was normally pro forma. The LDP controlled the Diet, so there wasn't any problem at that level. If we were able to work things out with the ministry at the level at which I was dealing, things went very smoothly. Now, needless to say when you run into a crisis in the relationship as we did when Kissinger's secret trip was revealed things got escalated way up the line and it was the ambassador who was dealing directly with the minister and political leadership.

Q: Who was your ambassador when you arrived in 1970?

BROWN: Armin Meyer.

Q: Yes.

BROWN: A Foreign Service professional, but a Middle East hand.

Q: Yes, I've often seen it as an odd fit there.

BROWN: Yes, and I would say not a particularly successful one.

Q: I'm sure you know, you were a junior officer, but within the embassy, what was the consensus or was there a feeling why Armin Meyer ended up in Japan?

BROWN: He was completely loyal to President Nixon. I think that was it.

Q: Well, that's probably. I mean it was a major embassy and Nixon remembered people who had been good to him when he was in the wilderness.

BROWN: I don't quite know what that connection was, but it was very clear to all of us in the political section that Meyer was loyal to the president and that whatever the president's policies were he was going to very faithfully follow them out. Of course, there's nothing wrong with that.

Q: No, no.

BROWN: The way it affected us was that he did not want anything reported to Washington that was critical of the president's policy. So, there was a lot of tension over what was reported and what wasn't reported. It often ended up with the political counselor saying sorry guys; this is what we're going to report.

Q: Well, that's sort of dangerous, isn't it?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: I mean no matter how, the president will live if people don't agree with him. I mean loyalty is not always a virtue.

BROWN: Well, one has to carry out orders, but the other side is that you must report accurately or Washington want have a reliable basis for making policy. Of course, we got around the reporting obstacles. Not that I was being particularly devious, but the political section as a whole got around it by passing messages through visitors, in telephone calls and private letters that were used to ensure that the people on the Japan desk knew our views. The desk was reading the summaries of the Japanese press and criticism of policy could not be hidden. However, if we tried to report that the president's policies were creating problems in our relations with Japan, that kind of commentary was not something that the embassy sent in officially.

Q: Now, you dealt with external relations. Before we move to the China one, what about, to me one of the great puzzlements remains with the Soviets and now the Russians, the hanging on to those little islands up to the north or not making some concession seem and the fact that we were just at the time of the reversion of Okinawa. I mean the contrast couldn't have been greater and where it seemed like the Soviets were in a continual case of shooting themselves in the foot with Japanese relations. It was extremely important for the Soviets.

BROWN: Well, one would have thought so. The Northern Territories were a thorn in the side of the Japanese-Soviet relationship. In recent years, they have tried to deal with it off and on in a more compromising way, but even now nationalist sentiments block progress. But nothing was really happening on that issue in the '70s when I was there. It had been discussed in the mid-'50s trying to deal with this and trying to work out a compromise that involved two of the islands coming to the Japanese and the status of the other two being unresolved. However, that didn't work out then and issue was frozen the whole time I was there.

Q: It must have given a certain amount of pleasure in a way or at least made things easier for us wasn't it to watch this? I mean if it meant that flank you didn't have to worry about.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Well, then, how about again to the south, what about, did you get involved in the relationship over say Indonesia or the Philippines?

BROWN: Quite frankly, I can't remember any big issues there. We didn't really have much in terms of serious problems with the Japanese in terms of policy in Vietnam. We were in the process of trying to wind things down and the Japanese had no problem with that. That was not a big issue.

Q: What about with China? You know, prior to the Kissinger thing because Kissinger visit was when?

BROWN: It was in August of 1971.

Q: Yes. So, what was the state that we were observing of Japanese Chinese relations?

BROWN: Our policies were quite consistent with each other in the sense that neither of us had relations with Beijing and both governments were in the process of thinking about how to change that and modifying their policies in modest ways. Both governments were in sync in terms of supporting the Republic of China in the UN. The big difference was that the Japanese had a substantial economic relationship with China and the U.S. did not. We still had an embargo on trade with China, though U.S. had already been going through a process of small steps with China to signal that we were open to improving relations. Then the big break came when China invited the U.S. ping pong team.

Q: That was the famous ping pong diplomacy.

BROWN: Right. I didn't get involved in it personally because my boss here was also a China hand, Bill Cunningham and he jumped on that as soon as he heard that the news of the invitation. The ping pong team actually transited through Tokyo on the way to China. Bill helped facilitate that and went out to the airport and saw them.

Q: What was the Japanese economic relationship with China?

BROWN: It was not an aid relationship, but a purely commercial one, and it was done under the rubric of a trade agreement between a Japanese trading association rather than the government and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, a government front group handling Beijing's trade with the West. It was a pretty substantial relationship. For Japan, which was promoting itself as a trading nation, being able to sell everywhere was important. The U.S. didn't really have a problem with this Japanese trade because we too were moving away from a strict embargo on trade with China.

Q: Was there any disquiet in this period by say the Japanese hands of watching Japan, it was about this time Japan was really turning into an economic powerhouse, wasn't it?

BROWN: Yes. This was their period of fast growth and also a period in which the economists in Japan were making predictions to show when the Japanese per capita income was going to surpass the United States, when the Japanese economy was going to end up being bigger than the American economy. So, yes, the Japanese were on a roll.

Q: Was there any concern on our part, I mean, you know, people looking out from the embassy that you were hearing about?

BROWN: When I was there, no, subsequently we can talk when I got on the Japan desk.

Q: Textiles of course were, Nixon owed a lot of his election to factory states in the South, part of the southern strategy. Textiles in those days were a big deal there in the Carolinas and that sort of thing. I guess that, did that intrude on what you were doing?

BROWN: It didn't intrude on what I was doing, but it was being handled by other people in the embassy and I was knowledgeable about what was going on and about the extent to which it was creating friction in the relationship. Nixon had met Tanaka who was I think at that time the Minister of International Trade Industry and that they had had a discussion on limiting textile exports. Tanaka had said something that for Japanese meant that they would study it, but not do anything. Nixon interpreted his remark to mean that Tanaka had agreed to solve the problem for the United States. That was a misunderstanding that created real strains in the relationship.

Q: Were you in a way being a China hand?

BROWN: Yes, we followed Japanese ties with China closely. I was not an intelligence officer but I read all open source information about China in Japan and reported it. I was supposed to maintain contact with the Japanese China watchers who met Chinese coming through Japan. There were academics whose knowledge and opinions about China we reported. But the main work was maintaining very close coordination with the Japanese Foreign Ministry. We exchanged information on what they were doing on what our policy was, the steps we were taking. There were annual consultations between the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, the China desk at the State Department and the Ministry and between their policy planning staff and our policy planning staff. We were in bed with each other. That's what made the absence of prior consultation about Kissinger's visit to China in 1971 such a shock.

The Japanese government was under a certain amount of pressure to build upon the economic relationship and to begin to improve relations with China. Some European countries were moving ahead to recognize China in the early 1970s. Out of deference to the U.S., the Japanese government was resisting the domestic pressures on it in order to stay in sync with the U.S. The State Department too was trying to keep our two countries on the same wave length. Then suddenly without a word of forewarning the U.S. takes a huge step to open up its relationship with Beijing. The government and the foreign ministry in particular felt that their confidence and support for the U.S. had been betrayed. There was a lot of bitterness in certain parts of the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

Q: how did you personally at this time, how did you hear about the news and what instructions were you giving and how did you deal with the damn thing?

BROWN: Well, you read about it in the news. I can't remember whether we saw Nixon's announcement on TV or not. We saw it replayed. Now, as it turned out this had been very closely held and even Secretary of State Rogers hadn't been told that Kissinger was making this trip to China. We in the embassy were taken by surprise, but when we learned the extent to which other people were equally in the dark, we didn't feel quite so bad ourselves. However, we still had to deal with the Japanese. I can remember going over there and having an extremely prickly conversation with Hiroshi Hashimoto who was then the head of the Office of Chinese Affairs. He was an older man and had spent a good part of his post war life involved in China. As a young man had been a soldier in the Japanese army at the very end of the Second World War if my recollection is right, he was in the air force. His reaction was very nationalistic. Over drinks he said this was the end of Japan's trusting the U.S. The relationship with the United States was going to change and Japan would have to start making its own policy thinking about its national interest. That was not the typical reaction. The typical reaction was not nearly so nationalistic and pained as he was. Yet it had been his job to make sure that his government knew exactly what the United States was doing on the China policy and he felt he had been betrayed.

Q: How did you respond?

BROWN: There is no response. There isn't a good response, but we said that we've got to move on from this. The next order of business between us was the annual fight over Chinese representation in the United Nations. This was something on which the Japanese and American governments had collaborated to an extraordinary degree on a daily basis exchanging intelligence about what was going on every capital in the world, about the demarches that were being made, divvying up responsibility on who could do a better job in persuading various capitals to support our common cause.

Q: I know the Americans had sort of assumed the Japanese had expended tremendous what you might call political capital in these fights over who was going to represent China in the United Nations because this was, every little capital, like you say, Togo or something like that and all of a sudden I can't remember what we did, what did we do, fudge it or something for the next time around?

BROWN: Well, there was a general presumption that this traumatic change in U.S. dealings with China was going to radically undermine the efforts to sustain Taiwan's place in the U.N. Nevertheless, the instructions that came out were to fight the good fight. The U.S. went to Taiwan and said the only way that there's going to be a hope of winning would be to go for dual representation, that is an approach which would create the possibility for both Taipei and Beijing to have a seat, even if Beijing. Washington tried to persuade Taipei that if we could sell this it was certain that the Chinese would reject it and that Taipei in the end would remain in the U.N. However, Chiang Kai-shek but was very deeply committed to the idea that the Republic of China was the sole legal government of all China and he was not going to give on that. So, what resulted was that Taipei said it opposed dual recognition but would not object to the U.S. pursuing the idea at the U.N. So on that understanding, the Japanese and American governments again together tried to sell this. However, after Nixon's announcement, many governments were rethinking their China policies because of what the United States had done. In the end we lost the vote in the United Nations and the Republic of China walked out. Our representative to the UN at the time was George Bush and he got up and he said that it is a reasonable thing for China to be in the United Nations, but it's unfair the way this came about because the principal of universality is important. A founding member has now been thrown out which sets a horrible precedent. I'm sure Kissinger probably didn't care at all that that had happened.

Q: Prior to this in talking around with both your colleagues in the embassy, but also, and then it carried over to talking to the Japanese in informal conversations. You know, when I came into the Foreign Service it seemed to me to be perfectly reasonable that eventually we're going to have to recognize China. I mean this was not, to say the least.

BROWN: You've got to live with the reality.

Q: Yes and I think most of my colleagues did and in talking around this was not one of these things that it wasn't staying gee, communism is a good idea or anything like that, it was just you know, we've got other big countries and they're just going to have to come around. Were the Japanese talking this way, too or did you avoid the conversation?

BROWN: No, before Nixon's announcement, I often talked with Japanese colleagues informally about how both our countries should be moving together to open relations with China. After Kissinger trip had been announced and knowing that Nixon himself was going to China in the following year, a process of political change was unleashed in Japan and within a year and a half Tokyo had worked out its deals and recognized China and devised a formula for maintaining an unofficial relationship with Taiwan which has worked for the Japanese pretty well and which in fact the United States more or less copied when we took the step in 1978.

Q: Well, what was the Japanese view of what was happening in China? In the first place, what was happening in China internally '71 or so?

BROWN: China was coming out of the Cultural Revolution period, the worst of it was over, central control had been reestablished throughout the country and things were beginning to look up. That was part of the backdrop in which the Chinese representation fight was taking place. It wasn't a China that was obviously in chaos and psychologically at war with the world that we were dealing with at the UN. It was a China that was beginning to come out of those policies and get back into more normal relations with the rest of the world.

Q: Did the Japanese in the press and all, did the Japanese press play much of a role in determining policy?

BROWN: First of all you had a variety of opinion in the Japanese press, from the liberal leaning socialists to the conservative Liberal Democrats (LDP) on the right. You had some who were strongly committed to maintaining the substance of the relationship with Taiwan and others including Tanaka who favored moving ahead and normalizing relations with China. You had a group within in the LDP that had traditionally had close contacts with people in China and were promoting normalization and you had people in the LDP who were very close to Taipei. So, there was a debate going on. When the U.S. made its move it significantly shifted its debate so that it was quite clear that Tanaka was going to normalize relations with China.

Q: Was there any understanding on the part of your contacts particularly at the foreign ministry and all about understanding why in a way that you were going to have this shock because this was a shock in the United States, too and it was mainly because had you announced this or done something you would have allowed the right wing in the United States to get cranked. You know, it's a political reality in every country that you've got when you have to do things, sometimes you have to do things suddenly and make them a sort of fait accompli otherwise you allow the forces that are opposed to it to build up enough pressure so that you can't do the thing. It sounds like Japan had the same forces I guess every country's got these forces?

BROWN: I think that was part of Nixon's calculation that, if he was going to make this kind of radical change, he needed to do it dramatically in order to outmaneuver the conservatives who would try and block such a policy change. You didn't have the same process in Japan. Japan's decision making is different. They engage seemingly endless debates to build a consensus. So, it was very clear a year before they recognized that this was where it was going to end. You could see these debates going on in the press, Japanese politicians positioning themselves in the media and partly through contacts with the foreign ministry. It was just a question of what the terms would be and the nature of the deal that would be made concerning their relations with Taiwan. Tanaka had to come up with a deal that was satisfactory to the wing of the Liberal Democratic Party, which had close ties with Taiwan.

Q: Well, I would think after the shock that we would, we just had to keep our mouths shut as far as the debate was going on.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: I mean even if we had a policy, it wouldn't have made any progress; it would just make it worse.

BROWN: We did not try and tell them how to suck eggs on normalization.

Q: Yes, there's a time to just keep your mouth shut and let that take care of it. Did you see any effect as far of the very strong nationalist Chinese supporters in the United States? You know, it used to be the China lobby or whatever you want to call it, you know, the, like it used to be so strong in the right wing of the United States trying to affect Japanese dealing with Taiwan for example?

BROWN: No, I didn't see any of that.

Q: I guess by that time that element in American political life wasn't very strong.

BROWN: Well, I think Nixon had judged correctly that he could sell the opening to China to conservatives as an effective anti-Soviet maneuver. In fact, he was correct. The country did come around without much anguish to support the steps he took at the time. When you get to 1978 with Carter normalizing, that's a different period than in 1971-72. I should go back to how we eventually got over the shock with the Japanese. I would say we got over it because many Japanese, despite their initial reactions, came to appreciate that Kissinger and Nixon were right that the only way to make such a change was through a dramatic move and understood that their initiative was moving in what the Japanese considered the right direction. Therefore they came to live with it and see it as something that wasn't contrary to Japanese interests even though it had been done in a way that was very abrasive and regrettable.

Q: One of the things put out was that you couldn't share things with the Japanese because it got distributed I mean it.

BROWN: Yes, that was part of Nixon's thinking, and there was some accuracy. If you shared information with the Japanese confidentially about a U.S. initiative, there was a very strong impulse amongst Japanese politicians to leak it. This was because they wanted to show their publics that they had an intimate relationship with the United States, and the way to do this was to leak the news to the media and show that they knew before hand that something was going to happen.

Q: This of course is not unknown in other places, including Capitol Hill. I've interviewed Marshall Green who was the Assistant Secretary for the Far East and he described how he'd made some sort of thing saying where Kissinger supposedly had an upset stomach or something like that. He said, oh, hell, he's probably out talking to the Chinese or something like that. As soon as he started thinking about he made everybody sit and swear not to even mention that remark because that's exactly what could happen.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: In a way you think it has to probably have to be done that way. Always there was a predilection on the part of Kissinger and of Nixon to do it their own way and to get credit.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: How did you find sort of let's say before because that would have been when things were normal, before the opening to China, dealing with the foreign ministry?

BROWN: It was a very good relationship; personally we got a lot of information. We shared a lot of information. It was a close relationship and it still is.

Q: Did the Japanese have good information on China? I would imagine they would.

BROWN: They had all sorts of sources because of the economic relationship and people traveling back and forth and conversations that would take place with Chinese leaders when one or another delegation went to Beijing. Did anyone have real access to the countryside and what was going on in China? No, but we were all trying to share the information that we had. They did their intelligence reports and gave copies to us. We got material from INR, not so much from the CIA because the station had its own relationship with the Cabinet Research Office. So, many analytical reports were being sent back and forth.

Q: Did you all have a feel for the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution at that time?

BROWN: I don't know. You certainly were aware of how it had disrupted China, but you didn't really understand then its full impact, as I recall.

Q: Did you know, one of the things I'm struck about people who got involved in that first opening to China. I was just talking yesterday with Winston Lord. I did a very long interview with him and the sort of the thrill of seeing Mao Zedong and all that, but I mean in a way it's almost although, nobody was really making note that this guy at least in my estimation was a real monster. The things he did to his country are just beyond belief. Was this at all coming out at this particular time you were dealing with it?

BROWN: We had the impression of him as a megalomaniac who was very far long in his years and was just losing it a little bit.

Q: A senior moment. How about Zhou? Was he considered the voice of rationality or something?

BROWN: That was certainly the impression we had. I can't recall any particular episodes from the period when I was there, 1970 to 1973, that involved Zhou in a big way. My memory's not as good as I'd like it to be.

Q: Was the feeling that by the Japanese that China was a danger as far as an expansive country or not?

BROWN: No. That was their view at that time. There wasn't a feeling of hostility. In general, Japanese saw China as a neighboring country with which they ought to have a normal relationship. It was out of deference to the United States that Japan did not normalize sooner. In that period, China was not in the era of reform and growth. There was not a sense that China was what we'd call today a rising power that might be a threat.

Q: What about looking at China I mean you had the French and British embassies and the Yugoslav embassy all of which had relations with China. Were you getting anything from them?

BROWN: We didn't get it in Tokyo, but I'm sure the U.S. government was getting it elsewhere.

Q: This wasn't part of your beat?

BROWN: No. We met with other embassies and talked about things from time to time and I particularly would spend a lot of time talking to people in the British Embassy and the Australian Embassy who were following developments in the evolution of Japan's China policy the same way I was to try to trade notes and exchange analysis. I didn't have much to do with the Taiwan Embassy, though my recollection on this is not clear.

Q: After the Nixon visit, well, I mean the Kissinger visit first, as far as dealing I mean your job was it mainly assuaging hurt feelings. I mean were there developments or were the Japanese in a way turned loose as far as China was concerned?

BROWN: Yes. They felt they freed to do what was in their best interests. They would keep us informed. My recollection is that I had to work harder to find things out and double check sources. It wasn't quite as open as it had been in the past. It was more a job of piecing information together to understand what was going on in the political process in Tokyo.

Q: Well, I imagine the Japanese press must have gone wild, not just against us, but the whole idea of okay, now we can really report on China and you know, I mean, in that particular relationship. Things must have been sort of fast and loose.

BROWN: My memory is failing me. I can't remember whether there was a big rush of Japanese reporters to go into China at the time. I can't remember which papers had those kinds of relationships whether that was changing or not. My recollection is that the Chinese were quite skillful at cultivating favorites amongst the Japanese press and freezing out those whose opinions they didn't like.

Q: Korea. The two Koreas, did they enter into your purview at all?

BROWN: Yes, but I can't recall doing a great deal on Korean affairs. The most dramatic thing that happened in that period happened a couple of months after I left. That was the kidnapping of Kim Dae-Jung when he was in Japan. That was in the fall of 1973.

Q: Oh, yes.

BROWN: The KCIA kidnapped him, but that happened after I left. Japan had normalized relations with Korea before I got there.

Q: Yes. Well, the Koreans even today there's a real problem with the Koreans. The Koreans and Japanese. Japanese rule had not been benign.

BROWN: Not at all.

Q: Who was the DCM when you were there?

BROWN: It was Dick Snyder at the beginning and then Tom Shoesmith, both absolutely superb officers.

Q: Dick Snyder was my ambassador in Korea when I was there. Did you, for you did you feel that you had finally entered the world of real diplomacy and all?

BROWN: I certainly did. Except for the China issue, not a great deal was happening, but Japan was slowly moving towards what was a very important decision which was to ratify the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Another major issue that I had to follow was attitudes within Japan on nuclear weapons issues. What was the Japanese government doing in terms of eventually ratifying the NPT? What were political and public views on ratification?

Q: I would have felt that it would have been an absolute surety that they were going to say hell, we don't like nuclear weapons for obvious reasons and whatever you want to do to stop it, we'll sign it.

BROWN: Well, in the end, that is what they did, but the issue was debated at length. There were elements on the conservative side of the spectrum that complicated the process. Consultation had to take place; everyone had to be brought onboard. Japan had to watch what other countries were doing and who was ratifying. They didn't want to be way out ahead of the pack. They didn't want to be way behind the pack.

Q: But it's interesting, you know, observing close hand Japanese diplomacy. One doesn't see the Japanese hand in a lot of those things. I mean when you think about you know, as we have today, you think about France for example, its fingerprints were all over everything, but what about Japan? Was there a style of diplomacy that you saw?

BROWN: At that point in time, Japan had not begun to think about having an independent diplomacy. They were still very much in the mode of being with the U.S. I think the shock on China was one of the things that began to prod them in the direction of saying well, you know, the war has been over for almost 30 years now. It's time for Japan to start having its own policies. The amazing thing is that we're now into the 21st Century and this sort of debate about whether Japan is going to have an independent policy from the United States still goes on. It's advanced and things have affected it over time, but it's been a very slow process in coming.

Q: Did you find the LDP had any particular cast as far as foreign affairs as opposed to I guess it would be the left wing?

BROWN: Yes. There was the Japanese Socialist Party, which was still opposed to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. They were in favor of moving rapidly ahead to recognize China, dumping Taiwan. They wanted to normalize relations with North Korea rapidly. That was part of the political scene, but the JSP was always a minority, and the real action was what was going on in the bureaucracy and within the LDP. Where's opinion within the LDP shifted at any given time? That's what you had to take into account.

Q: Well, say in the foreign ministry was the foreign ministry responsive to the mood of the LDP or did the foreign ministry kind of do its thing?

BROWN: The Foreign Ministry had a very strong sense, the ethic of the Japanese bureaucracy, that they were the guardians of the national interest. The ministry knew what was happening internationally. It understood the sophistication and the complexities of international relations. Therefore, it was their job to make sure that Japan stays on the right course. That meant that the Foreign Ministry had to guide the LDP to do what's right for Japan. As I said, they didn't have to worry about the other parties because the LDP commanded a majority in the Diet. It was just a matter of infiltrating sensible ideas into the LDP. That was done a lot at these evening entertainment parties that went on endlessly and at various levels. The office directors, who were the people I was dealing with, would go off in the evening for dinners and drinking with junior LDP politicians and people in the business community who had interests in China policy. Policy was worked out behind the scene. If a Japanese bureaucrat was doing his job well he was able to come up with the ideas, to percolate them up through his own system. Then the system at the senior levels would do this quiet liaison with people in the LDP and the LDP itself was a very hierarchical and structured organization. It was a bottom up type of decision-making. It wasn't the LDP driving policy; it was the mid levels of the bureaucracy driving it.

Q: But you're saying an interesting thing that much of the Japanese bureaucratic system was giving power below at least, things could ferment up to the top. I mean it wasn't these were at the lower level, these weren't just faceless people putting stamps on things.

BROWN: Absolutely not. From the office director on up, they were trying to structure and manage policy internationally.

Q: What about the, was there a good corps of America hands?

BROWN: Oh, yes, very much so, and there still is.

Q: Do they know it? I mean were they where they coming from?

BROWN: Well, it was a career service. If you happened to be the cream of the crop, you got to go to the country that was most important to Japan, which was the United States. You would go as a junior officer and then you return to American Affairs two or three times during your career, working in Washington and in the Bureau of American Affairs in Tokyo. Very typically people in this track would end up as ambassadors to the U.S. and as vice ministers at home.

Q: So, the America hands would be the equivalent of what we used to call the Russian hands. I mean this used to be where we were putting.

BROWN: Putting the best where it's most important.

Q: Yes, yes. How did you find, I'm probably getting my initials wrong. MITI or whatever it was.

BROWN: MITI, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

Q: MITI. Yes. I've always heard that was a very powerful thing, but at this particular time of '70 to '73, how did MITI fit into the foreign relations side?

BROWN: I wasn't the principal officer dealing with MITI then. It was the people on the economic side that had those relationships. The way I saw it was in the sense that MITI was very much involved in promoting Japanese exports and that meant in addition to selling to the U.S. and Europe, selling to China and Southeast Asia. They were very much involved in the economic aspects of relations with China. They were pushing to open things up so that Japan could export more. But that was not what was driving Japanese policy. The Foreign ministry was more important.

Q: You really didn't have the feeling that well, that the foreign ministry was subservient at all?

BROWN: Not at all. I mean the one agency that the foreign ministry had to be particularly careful of was the Ministry of Finance because it controlled the budget and resources.

Q: But that was administrative, but of course that's sort of the guts.

BROWN: Well, yes, if you're running an aid program, which Japan was not doing at that time in China but was doing everywhere in Southeast Asia, then what the Ministry of Finance thought the aid levels ought to be and how they fit into the budget and all that was high policy.

Q: Looking at it at that time do you think were the Japanese were, I mean much of their you might say their diplomacy, their outreach anyway, was aid. Aid missions doing things in a way. Was this an effective tool of the foreign ministry or was this sort of more benevolent I mean just doing good?

BROWN: Well, it wasn't just doing good for others because this was in the period when tying aid was a huge issue. The Japanese aid was tied tightly to promoting Japanese exports and that was an issue for the United States because of competition for sales in developing countries. There was an officer in the economic section who followed these issues and Japanese aid policy. The Japanese aid may have become more benevolent over time, but it certainly wasn't then. It was very clearly focused on promoting their economy.

Q: Did you with the opening to China; were you conflicted about being a China hand, Japanese hand and all? I mean all of a sudden this is a new ball game.

BROWN: I thought it was a great advantage to know something about Japan. I was able to go back and work in Chinese affairs, but I wasn't a person who was only a China hand as some others were. I would say the quintessential archetype of the China hand was Dick Williams who was my last CG in Hong Kong. He had had five overseas assignments during his 30 plus years in the Foreign Service. Four of them to Hong Kong and one to Guangzhou. Those are the only places that he had served overseas. I mean he worked on other things back in Washington, but that wasn't the career track I was on. I was very happy being able to go from China to something else and then back to China and then do something else and so forth.

Q: Well, then when you in 1973 after this real immersion because there's nothing like being in a place where you really have a challenge which I would imagine that you'd felt that you'd been through the fire as far as having to deal with.

BROWN: I'd thought that I had learned the trade so to speak.

Q: So, what did you do in 1973?

BROWN: I came back to INR to work on China. I wanted a job on China and I couldn't get one on the desk so I accepted one working in INR analyzing China.

Q: You were doing that from '73 to?

BROWN: I did it for just less than a year because I found out that I really didn't like being an analyst, writing and rewriting papers and carrying classified papers to the desk. That wasn't terribly satisfying. So as soon as I could work it out I got out of that business and got on to the Japan desk. That was thanks to the help of Bill Sherman who had been my Political Counselor in Tokyo and who was then the Director of Japanese Affairs. He managed to make it possible for me to go work as an economic officer on the Japan desk for two years.

Q: That would be basically '74 to '76?

BROWN: Yes 1974 to 1976.

Q: Quickly on INR, what piece of the action did you have?

BROWN: Some of China's foreign policy. I remember one thing I did was a study on China's ability to project military power into the South China Sea and the capabilities of other military forces of countries involved in the South China Sea. What would be Vietnam's capabilities, what were the Philippines' capabilities? What else I was doing, I really can't remember. I do remember that I didn't take to it very well, which is funny right now that I'm in academia and enjoy history and analysis. At the time, writing papers, which were then rewritten by three other levels before they saw the light of day, didn't appeal to me. I just wanted to get back into the action.

Q: Well, it's really very frustrating. I know I had a short stint in INR and I took a different path where I was a consular officer. I made decisions. I liked running consular sections and you know, getting patted on the head and told yes, your paper is alright, but let me really change it and all that. Some people take to this. You're showing in one way this is why being a China hand at the time when you started was of that nature.

BROWN: Right.

Q: Well, then '74 to '76 all of a sudden you're dubbed an economic officer.

BROWN: That was a misnomer because I did very little economic work. Most of what I did on the desk was arranging visits by prime ministers, foreign ministers and the first visit to the United States by a Japanese Emperor, Hirohito.

Q: Oh, yes.

BROWN: Hirohito came for a two week visit in October 1975. We started a year in advance to plan this visit.

Q: It must have been a lot of trepidation, wasn't it, because this man was the leader of the country who attacked us?

BROWN: The historiography at that time, however, painted a picture of a man who had been a prisoner of the bureaucracy that had created him, who was by training a marine biologist and a pacifist, whose most important decision during the war was the decision to end the war. That was the general historiography at the time. It was 1975 and that was 30 years after the war. He was then an old man who no longer had any role in Japanese politics other than a purely ceremonial one. The judgment was that there would be some flak, some demonstrations, but that we could pull the visit off successfully as a positive sign that 30 years later the U.S. and Japan had moved beyond the war. I think it came off that way.

Q: Well, what in planning of this... There must have been, unlike almost any other State visit, you had to really think about history. You know, one had to be extremely aware of what every step meant, didn't one?

BROWN: You got lots of help from the Japanese. We tried to structure a visit around the right kind of ceremony in Washington. Ceremony is of course symbolic and very important to Japanese.

Q: Who was the president at the time?

BROWN: Ford. We would focus on events that would symbolize positive aspects. For instance, we took the Emperor to the Woodhole Oceanographic Institute and allowed him to spend a half day looking through microscopes at things that live between grains of sand on the beach. He was a marine biologist and interested in such research. We took him to an Illinois farm that produced soybeans for export to Japan. We took him to Disneyland because that was a major attraction for Japanese tourists. We took him to San Francisco, to Hawaii and tried to portray him as something of a human being in a way that would contribute to good U.S.-Japan relations. There were some demonstrations against him. There was some intelligence that we had to deal with. Some people might try to disrupt the visit. As it turned out, there was very little of that and the visit went off in a reasonably positive way. It generated immense coverage in Japan.

Q: The Japanese press in general is really something, isn't it? Even then? How did you find dealing with the Japanese court? I'm told that next to the court of St. James, this one takes and maybe the Austro Hungarian court, this one is really an acronym, a very difficult court.

BROWN: As I said, it took a year to plan, and the Japanese were all the time explaining to us the way the court operated and how things would have to be handled. It was sort of the reverse the demands we make when an American president travels overseas. Well, they were coming and telling us politely this is the way things are going to be done. This is who will sit in the car with the emperor and this is where the emperor will go and this is the way it's going to be handled. We were intent upon having a visit that would play well in Japan and also be positive in the U.S., but we realized with the media attention was going to be infinitely greater in Japan than in the U.S. So, we on the Japan desk were between the Japanese Embassy and the American hosts at each location. I recall we arranged two detailed advance visits to each stop. The Japanese team and an American team going out and talking events through with everybody involved.

Q: I would think that one of your big problems would be protocol, you know, the wife of the mayor of Houston or something like this.

BROWN: The biggest problem that we had was the governor of Illinois whose name I can't remember and the mayor of Chicago. Which one was going to ride with the Emperor into Chicago?

Q: Oh my God.

BROWN: Was it going to be the governor or the mayor? I recall the mayor won.

Q: Well, when you get right down to it, when you're looking at national politics, the mayor of Chicago has almost everybody knows who the mayor of Chicago is. I mean very few know who the governor of Illinois is.

BROWN: Right.

Q: Well, did you run across anything like that? I interviewed somebody who had to deal with a visit of the queen of Thailand and she did not like people mentioning the movie The King and I and of course every hostess said, oh, I just loved The King and I, you know and dealing with that sort of thing.

BROWN: Actually, I don't recall anything like that. Most Americans that we were dealing with whether it was protocol people in Chicago, or the people at the Woodshole, or the folks at Disneyland, were remarkably understanding and accommodating. For example, at Disneyland stop, the management had to radically alter the way the park operated for a day to make sure that all of the security and protocol concerns about the Emperor were taken care of. In the end the emperor shook hands with Mickey Mouse, which would have been unthinkable before the war. I can't remember whether the imperial household agency was really enthusiastic about that, but the Foreign Ministry wanted to humanize the Emperor to a degree in the way he was portrayed back in Japan and show him as a human being. So, shaking hands with Mickey Mouse was part of that and climbing up onto a huge combine at a farm and being photographed talking to the farmer about how this machine worked to cut down the soybean plants was part of what the Foreign Ministry wanted to do in terms of the media coverage of the Emperor back home.

Q: How did the Emperor come out in your impression as a human being? Did you get any feel for him?

BROWN: No, I did not because in fact I had very little contact with the Emperor. When the visit took place, Japanese protocol required that senior officials take the lead. Their Prime Minister accompanied the Emperor to Washington. And on our side, senior people had to be involved. The Secretary of Agriculture and the Governor of Illinois accompanied him to the farm in Illinois and so forth.

Q: There was feedback and that sort of thing.

BROWN: The only time I actually had some contact with him was at the hotel in San Francisco at about 11:00 one night. I was in our control room on the floor. Down the hall came this old man in his pajamas asking to find somebody from the Japanese side. I just happened to be there. There was no one from the Japanese side around. I can't even remember how I said this in Japanese, but I said something like, "Your majesty, can I help? What do you need? I will find someone." He said "please" and turned around. I didn't engage him in conversation, but found someone from the Japanese control room. There was a foreign ministry officer in the control room, who later told me that everyone from the Imperial Household Agency had gone out to enjoy San Francisco. I did meet him in receiving lines, but when I did go along to events, I was back in car 27, you know.

Q: Were you involved in the visit of President Ford to Japan?

BROWN: I wrote the papers for it, drafted the toasts, was invited to the state dinner, but did sit in with the President.

Q: I keep thinking of that picture showing Ford as this, in a long sort of morning suit and his too short pants.

BROWN: That has slipped out of memory. I don't know where you saw that.

Q: Were you suffering from schizophrenia, sort of personnel wise, were you a Japanese or a Chinese hand or was there such a creature as an Asian hand?

BROWN: There really wasn't. I considered myself all along a China hand. Japan was an interest I developed in addition to my interest in China. My career took me to many parts of Asia, but I always thought of myself as a China hand.

Q: Did you notice with the Japanese hands, you know, we talk about the China hand going back and forth to a few places, well, the Japanese hand has one place to go and did you find that this your exposure to both the desk and in Tokyo, did this produce somebody who was almost overly localized, too much localities in that?

BROWN: There is this danger. As I said earlier, I know some China hands who worked on China pretty much their whole career. There were some Japan hands who spent much of their career on Japan. In Japan, you said there's only one place. In fact at that time, there were more places to go as a Japan hand than as a China hand. In China, you could go to Taipei or Hong Kong and that was it, but in Japan you could go to Sapporo, or Osaka or Naha, Fukuoka or Nagoya in addition to Tokyo. A Japan hand could study the language training, go out a consulate, go back to the desk, go out to the embassy, come back to the desk, get a higher job, go back to the embassy a third time as a DCM or political counselor. There are plenty of examples of people who had that kind of very focused Japanese career and would have maybe one or two non-Japanese jobs. I was quite happy with a more diversified set of experiences.

Q: Be more fun.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: It gave you also a much broader view.

BROWN: I think so.

Q: Well, now in '76 what did you do?

BROWN: I went to the Office of the Republic of China Affairs which was the desk dealing with Taiwan and I was there for a little over two years until the fall of 1978.

Q: Well, this also was a very interesting time, wasn't it?

BROWN: There were, I would say, three interesting aspects of it. One concerned Carter and human rights. Carter created a new U.S. human rights policy, which brought some tensions between desks and the human rights bureau that was being created then. Second, we had the first confrontation with Taiwan over nuclear weapons development when I was there. The third was the lead up to normalization with China. I actually left the desk before normalization, but I was there under Dick Holbrook when my boss Harvey Feldman was very much involved in planning how we would handle the relationship with Taiwan along the lines of the Japanese model when we recognized the PRC. He handled that part of it pretty much on his own. Normalization was being managed out of the White House by Mike Oksenberg and Brezinski. Only a few officials in the Department were involved, including Harvey Feldman.

Q: Let's go to the human rights. You started in '76 so that you were on the Republic of China's desk during the end of the Ford administration. So, when the Carter administration came onboard, was there concern that they were going to upset things or not?

BROWN: There was a tension. We were in the process of doing something that hadn't really been done before which was to articulate a human rights policy with respect to Taiwan. We were dealing with a country, Taiwan, where there were very serious human rights issues. Taiwan was still a one party dictatorship. Chiang Kai-shek had just passed away. His son Chiang Ching-kuo, who had run the security services, was Premier. There was no freedom of expression on political issues. So, there were serious human rights concerns. I was fortunate enough to work for a great officer, Burt Levin. He was determined and I shared his view, that the desk were going to stay ahead of the curve and set policy for Taiwan before the human rights bureau - I think her name was Pat Derian - tried to cease the issue.

Q: Yes, Pat Derian.

BROWN: Burt's approach, and one I shared, was the desk would be active on this acting in a way that made sense and would yield results, rather than being driven by Pat Derian.

Q: It sounds like this was a very forward policy because so many of the desks sort of resisted the idea of well we can't do this because of such and so. In other words, rather than being proactive, they sat back and tried to be instructive.

BROWN: We didn't take that attitude. Also, the Congress was getting interested in human rights issues on Taiwan and that kept some pressure on us.

Q: This is tape three, side one with David Brown. Well, how did we see things? In the first place when you went to that desk, it must have been on everybody's mind that things were changing. I mean Chiang was dead. We recognized China.

BROWN: Recognition came later.

Q: I mean hadn't recognized, I mean we'd opened to China, which was a whole new ball game, and Taiwan was not going to be the major player anymore.

BROWN: That's right.

Q: Was there a sort of sitting around and regrouping and saying okay, where do we go from here?

BROWN: It was very clear when Holbrook came into the Department that things were going to change, that the U.S. was going to move ahead and normalize relations with the PRC. How that was going to be handled was an issue, but not whether it was going to be done. I guess there were two aspects of it from our perspective. One was how do you fit Taiwan into this? I can remember the first briefing we had with Holbrook. He had been around to the various desks and I can't remember whether we were the last or not, but we were definitely not at the high end of his list of priorities. I can remember sitting down with Burt.

Q: Burt?

BROWN: Burt Levin. Holbrook came to talk with the desk. Of course when one had a briefing with Holbrook, most of the talking was done by Holbrook. He started it off by explaining how proud he was that he had never been to Taiwan. He had never accepted a visit, had no contact, and wasn't being sucked in by the ROC lobby. I recall that the main point we wanted to get across was that if we wanted to normalize relations successfully with Beijing, we would have to take care of the relationship with Taiwan in a manner that would be acceptable to the Congress. Holbrook wasn't interested in that aspect of it.

Q: I recall around this time I was in Seoul. I was chief of the consular section there and I remember Holbrook making a visit. He came across in those days as a young hotshot who was very full of himself, which he probably still maintains, but he had been on the outside and was not really overly accepted within the establishment.

BROWN: Well, I don't know if you remember how his time at the Department started or not. Art Hummel had been DAS and was moved up to be Assistant Secretary for a period at the end of the Ford administration. Holbrook just sent a word around that Art and all of the DAS's should be out of their offices by the 20th of January. Hummel offered to brief him, but to the best of my knowledge Holbrook never met Art Hummel to talk about the transition and what the issues were. He knew what he was going to do. He was sure he was well informed. He knew the people he was going to bring in. These were professionals. Roger Sullivan I think came in as the DAS for China, but Holbrook was cleaning house, things were going to be different. I have a lot of respect for Holbrook, but in his personal relations with people, he can be either very charming if you are cooperating with him, but if you're in the way, he just pushes you aside.

Q: He's still a figure in sort of the political spectrum.

BROWN: He'd like to be Secretary of State.

Q: Yes. How did you go about? Let's deal with the first thing: human rights? It would have been an ambassador in Taiwan at that time.

BROWN: Yes, I believe it was McConaughy who was a four square supporter of the KMT. We were not out crusading, but Burt's view was that Taiwan was a society which was in the process of gradual change and that we should be trying to nudge them in the right direction. We didn't have many of the tools that we have now. For example, we didn't develop AID programs then to strengthen the Legislative Yuan. I don't recall that we changed the way the embassy operated. The embassy as I said earlier had long had an officer responsible for dealing with the opposition. We just tried to stay out ahead of the curve on the demarches to be made. We were going to write them in our office and clear them rather than let the human rights folks take the lead.

It was just at this time that the first Congressional hearing on human rights in Taiwan was held. It was Burt Levin who was asked to present the administration's testimony. I'd love to go back and find the testimony to see if it sounds today as good as I recall thinking it was at the time. We tried to lay out the history of political change in China, where we thought things were going on Taiwan and how the U.S. could work effectively in Taiwan society to bring about change. How the U.S. ought to encourage change, not just criticize mistakes, without being heavy handed. Not to threaten cutting off aid or reducing military assistance, but by pursuing subtle diplomacy.

Q: Well, did you feel that Holbrook, did he spend any time on Taiwan?

BROWN: No. He did bring Harvey Feldman into the planning on what kind of relationship the U.S. would maintain with Taiwan after normalization. Harvey worked on a variety of alternatives for a consular relationship or for establishing a liaison office. But in the end, the decision was to accept an unofficial relationship along the lines of the Japanese. The Japanese arrangements were very informal. No legislation passed by their Diet. In the U.S. system everyone recognized that you would have to have a piece of legislation to establish the future relationship and give it, what's the term I'm looking for? Legal viability in the United States. That led to the legislation that Carter put forward in the spring of 1979. What Harvey was working, with some research help from those of us on the desk, was how do you structure this. What kind of office do you have? What should it be called? How do you maintain the legality of our agreements with Taiwan so that they would stay in effect? How do you set up a procedure where you could have new agreements and keep business going? All this was being studied by Harvey. There were scholars in the United States that were doing research on these subjects and presenting proposals. We collected their materials to ensure that their expertise was available in the Department.

Q: Was Chas Freeman there or not because I've interviewed the guy.

BROWN: I don't know where Chas was at the time.

Q: Moving back to the human rights side, how did Chiang respond? I mean was there, how were things going human rights-wise?

BROWN: The most positive thing happening in this period was that Chiang Ching-kuo was opening up the KMT to young educated Taiwanese. The KMT was a party dominated by mainlanders. So this new policy was extraordinarily important thing; it had started maybe three years earlier and was just beginning to pick up some steam. So, when I said we tried to encourage things that were happening, we were patting him on the back for doing this and we were trying to get credit for him in the U.S. for moving in this direction. I can't remember just who was thrown in jail while I was on the desk. We weren't apologizing for such things, but we were trying to get people to see that there were other positive things happening as well.

Q: Were there any problems with the Taiwanese I hear they have a wonderful network in the United States, almost as powerful as the Israeli network. Did that; was that something you had to consider politically?

BROWN: Not at that time. The McCarthy era was over. Anti-communist attitudes were still strong.

Q: We'll pick that up another time. How about the intelligence operations in the United States? Was this an irritant or not?

BROWN: Not that I recall. However, later when I was working on Taiwan affairs again in the 80s, we did have problems.

Q: You mentioned there were three things you had to deal with. One was human rights. We've discussed that. What were the other two now?

BROWN: The other two were the preparation for normalization. Americans on Taiwan were very concerned that we were going to pull the rug out from under them, that we weren't going to provide for Taiwan and that our economic interests there were going to be sacrificed. We dealt with that. I traveled to Taiwan and had to brief different groups about the thinking in Washington. While I wasn't cut in on the details of the negotiation, I knew the general direction of policy. We had to do the same thing in Washington when people would come through the State Department and get briefed.

The third issue was non-proliferation. The problem there was that the Taiwan's had bought from Canada a natural uranium research reactor, and the French were in the process of selling Taiwan reprocessing technology with the idea that they would be reprocessing fuel from their power reactors and using the reprocessed material for fuel rods for the power reactors. The research reactor used natural uranium fuel that was suitable for reprocessing into weapons grade plutonium. That was a very serious concern because this technology could be turned to nuclear weapons use. So, we expended immense effort to persuade the French and the Taiwanese that they should not go through with these reprocessing plans. A lot about this issue remains classified. I did a lot of the leg work on this for Burt and later Harvey.

Q: That sounds like a nuclear weapons program; what led Chiang down that road?

BROWN: The Chinese had detonated their first nuclear device in 1964 and were developing their nuclear weapons capability. Countering that capability was probably the prime motivation. Later our withdrawal from Vietnam and the enunciation of the Nixon doctrine, which said states should be primarily responsible for their own security, created doubts about the reliability of U.S. commitments. That may also have been a factor.

Q: So how did we deal with that?

BROWN: As I said, we worked to persuade Taiwan and the French to abandon the reprocessing project. We used the fact that Taiwan was a member of the NPT, the Non-proliferation Treaty, and that the safeguards that would have to be applied in Taiwan on any reprocessing facility could only be covered by a safeguards agreement that the United States had with Taiwan. France did not have a safeguards agreement that would cover their sale to Taiwan, and this gave us leverage. By this point in time, Taiwan had been expelled from the IAEA and there was no way the IAEA could negotiate new agreements with Taiwan. We were cooperating closely with the IAEA and one very knowledgeable officer from ACDA helped the IAEA understand some inspection problems at the Canadian reactor. In the end, we persuaded the French to drop the sale, and the Taiwanese to give up their work on reprocessing. Taiwan was in the process of building a second or third nuclear power station at this time, and nuclear energy was a significant part of their electric generation. The nuclear technology and fuel came from the U.S. This was part of our leverage. Although the reactor was a problem, Washington did not object to its operation believing that a combination of IAEA inspections and periodic U.S.-Taiwan nuclear energy consultations would assure effective safeguards.

Q: Did you get any feel for the attitudes for the personnel of the Taiwanese Embassy? This must have been, they must have thought they weren't quite sure where they were going and all this. It must have been a very difficult time for them.

BROWN: Yes, they were trying to do everything they could to maintain good relations with the United States. They realized they did not have a sympathetic ear in the Carter administration, so they were using their connections on the Hill.

Q: Did you find that the Carter administration was sort of turning a cold shoulder to Taiwan?

BROWN: Yes, they were keeping Taipei at arm's length. We were in the process of scaling down our military relationship with Taiwan. After our military role in Vietnam ended in 1973, we began withdrawing military units from Taiwan that had supported the war effort. The whole relationship had begun to change after Nixon's trip. We had made a commitment to the PRC that we would move in the direction of scaling back our military relations in Taiwan. Once Carter got in office, one part of the effort to avoid a sharp break in relations with Taiwan was to start a steady reduction of the military ties with Taiwan. Units were withdrawn and military assistance was shifted to a loan or sales basis. The MAAG and Taiwan Defense Command were gradually scaled back.

Q: Well, then when you left there in '78, I mean it was assumed I guess that we're going to have some sort of relationship with Taiwan, but that we were going to have an official relationship with China?

BROWN: Yes. I didn't know exactly where the negotiations stood. I left in August and it wasn't until December that the negotiations were consummated.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop, but where did you go in '78?

BROWN: I went to the U.S. Mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. I spent three years there.

Q: All right, we'll pick it up at that point. Great.

BROWN: Okay.

Q: Today is the 4th of March 2003. David, 1978, you're off to Vienna, Vienna with the, what was it called?

BROWN: The U.S. Mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency. At that time it was a separate office in Vienna with six or seven people.

Q: Was this part of the UN?

BROWN: The IAEA is related to the UN, and it is housed in a UN complex, but at that time our office that was representing us to the UN agencies there was separate from the IAEA mission. Subsequently they've been merged together into one office.

Q: What brought about your going there? Did you have, was somebody looking at your background?

BROWN: It wasn't entirely accidental. I was looking for something different to do outside of Asia, possibly at an international organization job. Through my work on the Taiwan desk on the nuclear issue, I had gotten to know quite a few people in the non-proliferation field in the U.S. government and that I think helped my credentials in applying for the IAEA job. Of course when I got to Vienna, the work only occasionally was directly related to non-proliferation. It was normal, rather routine international organization work related to the quarterly board meetings of the IAEA and the budget process within the agency and helping to get American people into the key jobs in the IAEA.

Q: You were doing this from '78 until when?

BROWN: Until '81.

Q: When you went there, this was your first sort of international organization, wasn't it?

BROWN: First and only.

Q: How would you, sort of as the new boy on the block for this sort of thing, how would you describe the atmosphere when you came in both within our delegation and beyond?

BROWN: Well, I came in at about the same time that Roger Kirk, our new ambassador to the IAEA came in. He was a very dynamic and thoughtful ambassador with a very strong background in European, Eastern European and Soviet affairs.

Q: He also had been to Vietnam I think hadn't he?

BROWN: Yes, we had met each other in Vietnam. I think he had been handling external affairs in the embassy when I was there.

Q: Yes, he was there when I was there.

BROWN: The most significant non-proliferation issue that came up during my time at the IAEA was the Israeli attack on Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor.

Q: Well, did you find I mean was the organization, was there a lot of as I would think a lot of sort of bureaucratic jockeying, I'm thinking not in our delegation particularly, but in the overall one, I mean more people looking out for titles, jobs, that sort of thing?

BROWN: Oh, within the UN system, there is a great deal of that. Countries naturally look after their nationals in the UN. Countries looking after their particular interests. Our principal interest was to make sure that the safeguards part of the agency's work was as strong as it could possibly be and that we had our people in the key positions to work on safeguards. We also had a strong interest in the IAEA's external affairs and budget offices. We wanted the agency to spend increase funding and resources for safeguards, whereas the LDCs.

Q: Less developed countries?

BROWN: Yes, the LDCs on the board were primarily interested in what the agency could do to help them with development of various kinds of atomic energy programs such as assistance with regulatory matters, medical isotopes, food irradiation, technical assistance and so forth. That's what they wanted the agency to spend its money on. So, there was a constant jockeying between ourselves and those members on how the budget was split up and whether it was going to grow or not grow, and in which areas.

Q: How from our delegation and sort of the point of view in '78, how was nuclear energy viewed at that time?

BROWN: It was very controversial internationally. It just so happened that when I was there, Austria, the host country, was conducting a referendum on nuclear power. They had built a nuclear power station, completed it and then decided to have a referendum on whether or not to operate it. The government was defeated, and they had to mothball the plant without ever having operated it. Sweden was going through the same process. I'm trying to think whether Three Mile Island had happened or not happened at that time.

Q: I think Three Mile Island was around that time. It was of course before Chernobyl, which really put the last nail in the coffin. How did you find, let's say we want to get people into the enforcement side of things. How did you go about doing this and how did we do?

BROWN: I mean there aren't great secrets on this. There is a lot of bargaining that goes on behind the scenes in the agency and a lot depends on making sure that the head of the agency is responsive to American concerns. The U.S. put forward good candidates and talked to director general to get their appointments. The Director General had to take into account the balance of forces within the Board of Governors, to which he was responsible. The Russians had their particular interests, as did the Europeans and others. When we had good candidates for key jobs of interest to us, we were usually successful.

Q: At this particular time the United States and the Soviets in this particular field were pretty much on the same wavelength weren't they?

BROWN: Yes, we were. The real trick was how to coordinate with the developing countries on the board. That meant a lot of consulting, paying attention to what they wanted, working with them at times to ensure that they in turn did not block our key objectives.

Q: Where did the nuclear powers such as France and Great Britain fall on this thing?

BROWN: They played a major role on the Board of Governors. One key issue during my tenure was pressure from the LDCs for more representation on the Board, which would dilute the strong position which the Western Europe and others group, of which we were a part, had on the Board. We pretty successfully contained that effort. On such issues, the Europeans and ourselves plus the Australians and the Canadians were all pretty much lined up on the same side. It happened that the Secretary to the Board the whole time I was there was a delightful Frenchman with whom I worked very closely. If you wanted things to go smoothly, you had to have his cooperation. He likewise knew that if you wanted things on his board to go smoothly, he didn't want to misjudge where the Americans were coming from.

Q: How was Israel handled at that point?

BROWN: Israel was a constant target of others in the Agency. Their opposition prevented Israel from ever getting on the Board of Governors. So, we ended up speaking for their interests from time to time. That proved to be very awkward, when Israel conducted the preemptive air strike that destroyed Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981. France had sold the reactor to Iraq. Iraq was a party to the Non-proliferation Treaty and the agency had a safeguards agreement with Iraq that covered the reactor, which at that point was soon to become operational. So you can imagine the outrage over the Israeli attack. There were intense discussions about what position the Board should take concerning the attack. Should the Agency take the lead or was this a matter for the UN Security Council.

Q: Was there the feeling that on the Iraqi side that this reactor and all that was being put up was a legitimate process or was it the feeling that this was going to turn into a weapons producing plant?

BROWN: Well, the reactor was ideally suited for producing weapons grade plutonium and Iraq was seeking to obtain reprocessing equipment from France. That was one perspective. The other was that the reactor was covered by IAEA safeguards, which many saw as making its eventual operation legal. Another question was whether the safeguards were effective. Were the Iraqis declaring the facilities and the material in the facility properly to the agency?

Q: You mentioned in Israel's nuclear program. Could you explain what that was, is and what the agency might be trying to do there?

BROWN: Israel is not a party to the non-proliferation treaty. So the agency didn't have any role there, but that didn't stop countries in the Middle East who were concerned about Israel's nuclear program from asserting that the agency ought to be involved and ought to be going out and trying to clarify what Israel was doing.

Q: How did you find people lined up or countries lined up on this Israel thing? Were we kind of alone?

BROWN: All I remember is that we were successful in preventing the Board from condemning Israel. Just how we got to that outcome I would have to go back and do some checking.

Q: Then did you, how did working in the international organization field, did that interest you or was it an interesting sideline?

BROWN: It was something I was glad that I had done so that I understood the processes and how these organizations functioned and how business got done in them, but it didn't fascinate me enough or entice me to apply for a job at the UN. In fact, quite the opposite. Once was enough.

Q: Well, in a way these things are intensely political. It sounds like working in or being in a legislature of some state or something like that. You're trading, you're working, you're cajoling, the whole thing.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Well, then you say, '81?

BROWN: '81, yes.

Q: '81, whither?

BROWN: I went to Beijing to head the economic section.

Q: And you were there from '81 to?

BROWN: Until 1983. I respectfully commented to the people who had asked me to head the economic section that, with the exception of some work on economics at the Japan desk, I didn't have any economic experience or training. I was delighted by the prospect of going to China, but wasn't certain I was the right person for the job. The answer was that there wasn't a lot of economics in this job. It would be much more about understanding the politics of how things get done in China. They said it didn't bother them, please come along, we need you.

Q: I can't remember had you been in Beijing before?

BROWN: No. I'd been in Taipei and worked on Mainland China in INR.

Q: Beijing in '81. What was it like there?

BROWN: Well, I arrived at a fortuitous time because the process of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening had started two years earlier. Just when I arrived the Chinese government had decided to do what they called opening 40 cities to travel by foreign diplomats. This meant that one no longer had to obtain Foreign Ministry permission each time one wanted to leave Beijing to travel to these 40 cities. So, we were there at a time when you could get out and see the country. It was also the beginning of the Reagan administration and that was the period when U.S.-China relations had worsened because of Reagan's campaign rhetoric about moving back toward an official relationship with Taiwan. So the political aspects of U.S.-China relations were tense for most of the time I was there. The economic relationship was starting from a low base, but was opening up rather remarkably. Trade was growing. We were beginning to get into our deficits with China. But the main thing was the trade was growing, and the economic relationship was seen as a new positive element in what had been just a strategic relationship until then. We in the Economic Section had a lot of opportunities to meet with academics in the Chinese government who were wrestling with the early stages of the reform effort. The Political Section didn't have much luck getting out and meeting these academics. In those days, when you went to see an official you had to call up to get his organization's permission to interview him. It was very structured society, but the structure was opening up on the economic side. We could travel, and the Economic Section set out to write an economic profile of each of the provinces in China, taking advantage of our new opportunity to send officers off for a week of interviewing in the provinces. We wanted to see how reform policies adopted at the center were actually being implemented in the field. We were also negotiating agreements in the economic area.

Q: What sort of things were you negotiating?

BROWN: Textiles, aviation, tourism, ocean shipping. There were a lot of bilateral negotiations going in this period.

Q: Was there a concern I mean we had done so much to turn Japan into a viable state and an economic power and all, this is our policy. All of a sudden we turn out with these huge deficits with Japan. Were we seeing as we did this we might have created another deficit monster in China?

BROWN: I don't recall that we saw China becoming a deficit monster, but it was very clear to us that the restrictions that the Chinese had on their markets combined with the openness of the American markets were leading in the direction of deficits. At that time, the numbers were only in the hundreds of millions of dollars. However, we were already in a situation where the Chinese statistics painted a different picture from the American statistics. So we were in the early stages of the debates about why this was so, trying to get the Chinese to focus on the fact that this was going to be a problem and that, if they didn't do something about the deficit, it was going to have an impact on the relationship. This is a story that was only beginning at that point and it's certainly not over yet.

Q: Say on textiles, were we trying to do limit the textiles?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: How successful or unsuccessful were we?

BROWN: We were successful of course because we could simply put on restrictions in those days if we judged that circumstances warranted it. However, we didn't want to act arbitrarily. We wanted to handle it within the context of the agreement and have the Chinese cooperating in managing the issue. Their textile industry was growing rapidly, and there were problems of shipping goods out to Hong Kong where they would be mislabeled and all sorts of shenanigans going on. These were typical trade negotiations. Both sides were being very tough and the embassy's role was to try and help the negotiators from Washington to get the best deal we could.

Q: Can you characterize the Chinese form of negotiating?

BROWN: The standard picture you have of Chinese negotiators is that they try and establish basic principles that will shape the negotiation at the beginning. They spend a great deal of time on trying to shape the parameters of the negotiations so that once those have been set, then the specifics would be easier to negotiate. The specifics of course were what Washington's negotiators wanted to focus on. For the Chinese, there were "principles" involved in the sense that the Chinese system was a planned managed economy, which they wanted us to accept as a given. You saw this on the shipping issue where they were just adamant that they had one major shipping company and it was going to control the ports and it was going to do all of the coastal shipping along the Chinese coast and that the role of foreign shipping was going to be very tightly regulated and controlled.

Q: Well, did we, there weren't Chinese ships that were going to be plying along our coasts anyway, were there?

BROWN: No. What we wanted was for U.S. shippers to get into the ports, set up their own loading and unloading facilities rather than using Chinese ones. We were pressing them to permit American shippers to operate intermodal services where we could not only ship things to the port, but also have a role in moving them beyond the ports to the consumers and this was just unacceptable to the Chinese.

Q: What was looking at the Chinese economy at that time, were you seeing I mean what did it look like? Were there still these huge government things sometimes run by the army or something like this?

BROWN: Well, the army's role wasn't very apparent at that time. In fact, the army in those days was not involved in the economy per se beyond the particular munitions industries that were linked to the military. In those days, China's international trade was still controlled by a relatively small number of large state trading companies that dealt with textiles or machinery or coal or so forth. If you wanted to export to China you had to deal with those monopoly companies. The process of reforming the Chinese economy had not gone very far at that point. They had started the creation of special economic zones in South China to promote a more open, free market approach to trade. Within these zones, it wasn't the central trading company that you would deal with; you could actually go deal with individual manufacturers or companies in these zones. You could set up joint ventures in the zones, primarily to export from China but do some sales in China too. The economy was just beginning to open up, but it was still very heavily managed and a lot of what we did, in addition to negotiating agreements, was to try and understand the process of reform and how it was being debated internally within China and who was promoting reform and who was against reform.

Q: What about companies, American companies coming to China? Were we encouraging them?

BROWN: Yes, we were working very hard to support them. In fact while I was there the Commerce Department set up their first Foreign Commercial Service office in China. We worked very hard to help companies get contracts and to lobby the Chinese government on behalf of American businesses.

Q: I would have thought that you would have been deluged by people who would take one look, I don't know what the population was, but it was probably approaching a billion at that time.

BROWN: A little over a billion. China conducted its first census since the '50s when we were there and it came out to about 1.1 billion

Q: I always think about it, supposedly, I heard somewhere where a casket maker in Ohio took one look and started doing a little calculation and said, hey. In other words, there's always business, but I think it goes back to the oil for the lamps of China and a book on.

BROWN: Add one inch to the garment of every Chinaman and you'll be rich.

Q: Yes. I mean and there is validity to this in the long run, but you must have had to deal with an awful lot of people who were pretty naive coming in.

BROWN: Yes, but most of the people we dealt with were the large American companies. There were also a number of small trading companies that had grown up during the '70s when the relationship was beginning to open up, but before we had full diplomatic relations. These were people who had been in China for a period of time and were establishing personal ties with people in the bureaucracy that dealt with economics. Law firms were also beginning to come in at this time. Some banks were already well established.

Q: At that point, were companies sort of looking towards, you know, right away making sizeable incomes or were they trying to establish bridgeheads with the potential for something later on?

BROWN: Well, you had both, but the mantra of everyone who had been involved in China was that you had to adopt a long-term perspective because you're not going to make money right off. You have to establish good business relationships and then the opportunities will start opening up and you can make money. That was the mantra, which was valid.

Q: Were you watching the rise of an entrepreneurial class within China? I mean it's almost, it's the idea of saying an entrepreneurial class developing. I mean the Chinese I think have it in their chromosomes. Still you have this bureaucracy. Was there something coming out of the bureaucracy?

BROWN: You'll have to remember this was '81 to '83. Deng had only regained power in December of 1978 and begun the reform process. Reform had started with agricultural sector. There was change in land ownership arrangements and in the way crop planting decisions were made. So, the thing that was very apparent when one traveled around was that in certain parts of China, the Yangtze River Delta and in Southern China, that farmers were able to take advantage of these looser arrangements and that the countryside was really beginning to take off. You could see evidence of prosperity in the form of new homes being built that were dramatically better than what had been there earlier. What you did not see at that point was the development of an urban entrepreneurial middle class. That came later. Another thing you didn't see at that time was an open job market. People could not easily move from one area of the country to another the way they can now. If you were a college graduate, you were still allocated a job by the state. You couldn't go out and obtain employment in a private company the way Chinese can now. If a joint venture wanted to hire people, they would go to a government service bureau that provided personnel to joint venture organizations. The embassy had to do the same thing. It went to the Diplomatic Services Bureau and was allocated Chinese employees to work in the embassy. A lot of the things that eventually loosened up life for ordinary Chinese had not occurred in '81, '82 or '83.

Q: Were we looking, I mean we have our trade negotiations, but were we looking at China at that time and seeing that the system that you just described and other attributes of the same central thing was going to have to dissolve and what would that leave?

BROWN: No. I'm trying to think of how to explain this. It's not that we didn't think that there were some possibilities that this might happen over the long term, but the system hadn't started changing enough that you really spent very much time thinking about the implications of it.

Q: I guess this is what they called the iron rice bowl or what was it?

BROWN: Yes, perhaps a better way to understand it is what they called the work unit system. Every Chinese was assigned to a work unit. If you were in the rural area you belonged to a cooperative. These cooperatives were breaking down and people were having the right to lease over a long period of time, land that they would then be responsible for developing under a contract between the family and the local cooperative on what they should produce. If you lived in an urban area your work unit was your university, your government organization, your factory, and these organizations were generally involved lifetime employment. If a Chinese wanted a house he would go to his work unit and they would allocate it. If he needed medical care, he went to the clinic that was run by his work unit. If he wanted to get married, he would ask permission of the work unit. When the couple wanted to have children, they would ask the work unit for permission to have a child.

Q: A child?

BROWN: It was all a very controlled society and people yes knew that if China was really going to reform itself all of these things would have to change, but in '81, '82, '83 the change was only taking place in the rural areas.

Q: What were you seeing as you traveled? I mean what was your impression, I assume you did go out and did the usual Foreign Service thing of going to a city and going out and looking at the steel mill and you know, visiting the university and that sort of thing. Were you getting a sense from the people a sense of excitement that things are beginning to change or what?

BROWN: I did this. I visited Shenzhen, which was the special economic zone across from Hong Kong. I had been up to the border in Hong Kong in the '60s and looked across at what was basically rice fields. I came back in '81 a couple of years after they had established this zone and in the zone you began to see a small city taking shape. There were joint venture companies being established some of which involved American companies. Such visits made it clear that something really important was happening. I also visited Hunan, the province where Mao Tse-tung had been born and spent a week going out into the countryside. One saw an agricultural scene that was becoming more prosperous and a little loosening of the controls on people. By contrast, if one went to North China, which is a less fertile wheat growing area, one didn't see signs that life had changed very much for people. So, it was a very, quite a mixed picture you would get traveling.

Q: Were Taiwanese able to do any investment at that point?

BROWN: Taiwanese had permission to travel to the mainland. We knew that a certain amount of investment was taking place. We knew that there was Taiwan money mixed in with the money that was coming in from Hong Kong, but it wasn't a big factor in the equation. Was the SEZ, the Special Economic Zone experiment in China something that had at least some antecedents in the export processing zones, which Taiwan had developed in the late '60s? Yes. People in China had been looking around at what the Asian Tigers, including Taiwan, had been doing to successfully develop their economies. The Chinese approach wasn't the same, but it had some antecedents there. When one talked to Chinese academics or got access to their internal publications, it was clear that they had studied these things.

Q: Well, now Hong Kong was not part of China at this point.

BROWN: It was a British crown colony.

Q: At that point it was in '89 when it was turned over to?

BROWN: Reversion was in 1997. The agreement that started this process was negotiated between the British and the Chinese in 1984 after I had left.

Q: So, at that time Hong Kong was seen as an entree point or something like that?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Was your experience in dealing with the Chinese bureaucracy different than say the political section, was it a different breed of cat?

BROWN: Well, as I said, the economic relationship was growing at a time when political relations were strained between the U.S. and China. The economic section had more access. Positive things were happening, things the Chinese were interested in and so we had easier entree into Chinese society than the people in the political section did.

Q: What about the universities? Did you see these? Were they kicking out pretty good people in the economic field, technical fields?

BROWN: We did not have a great deal of contact with the universities. However, this was the period when China resumed post-graduate education. That had collapsed during the Cultural Revolution and no masters or doctor degrees had been issued for about a decade. In '81 and '82 they began to graduate their first classes of new Ph.D.'s. Things were happening in this area, but it wasn't an area that the U.S. Embassy had a great deal of contact with at least not in the economic section. We went to the economic research institutes.

Q: During part of this period, I was seconded as a consular officer to the immigration and naturalization service and I remember every morning I would get a copy of the student applications for or waivers for students to come in. China was really beginning to deluge our institutions with graduate students.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: We must have seen this as a really major thing.

BROWN: Yes, it was a sign that they were opening up. I don't remember the numbers.

Q: I mean obviously we're talking about a billion, you're not talking about, but essentially there were a significant number of people coming in at that time.

BROWN: Yes and it was significant because in the '50s, '60s, '70s, Chinese had not gone to the West. They had gone, to the extent they had gone anywhere, to the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc. So, something important was happening. Of course, there was uncertainty about how many of the students who went overseas were going to come back. Even though in the early days the Chinese government was financing most of those who went.

Q: I think wasn't there a tennis player and a few problems like that?

BROWN: You've got a good memory. Yes, Hu Na, I believe. She defected while we were there and this was one of the frictions in the relationship because she had played tennis with one of the principal reform leaders.

Q: Well, also were we noticing and was it true that the I don't know what to call them, the cadre, in other words, the top dogs were sending their children to the United States, weren't they?

BROWN: Well, they certainly are now. I don't recall that that pattern had developed at that time. We did have some issues related to Taiwan that came back on the economic side. One had to do with U.S. airlines. Could they fly both to Taiwan and to the mainland? The answer at the time was yes. However, the political tensions in the relationship threatened that pattern. The Chinese tried to argue that if the airlines are going to expand in China those same airlines couldn't be expanding their operations in Taiwan. There was also an issue related to I think it was First Chicago Bank that was pressured by Beijing to close their banking operations in Taiwan as the price of getting into China. Then subsequently other banks got in without paying that price. So, part of what we were trying to do was to argue with the Chinese that they shouldn't be putting these political conditions on economic relationships. To the extent that issues involved government-to-government agreements, i.e., in the aviation field, we weren't going to tolerate that kind of conditionality.

Q: Did you get the feeling in this time that the Reagan administration was beginning to change its attitude towards China? I mean a lot of administrations come in with an attitude and then when it brushes up against reality and the sort of economic thing it begins to change.

BROWN: Yes, that was happening. It was happening next door in the political section in the sense that during that period we were negotiating on arms sales to Taiwan. You could see in the process of that how the Reagan administration was adjusting to reality. Contrary to his campaign rhetoric, the administration decided early on that it wouldn't try to restore an official relationship with Taiwan and then they made the decision not to sell Taiwan in advance aircraft. Then in order to get over the political problems in the relationship, the Reagan administration agreed to negotiate a long term relationship on arms sales to Taiwan. That resulted in something called the August 1982 communiqué<sup>1/2</sup>, which set some broad parameters for how arms sales would be handled. What had happened was that the Reagan administration had decided to drop a lot of the things that they had been thinking about doing with Taiwan because they realized that China was an important element in dealing with the Soviet Union.

Q: How did we look upon other countries opening up and doing economic things, commercial work with China? I mean did we find ourselves, was it a rivalry or was everybody happily going about their business without worrying about the others?

BROWN: It was much more a cooperative endeavor to understand how China was changing and how you could encourage movement in that direction. Was there rivalry? Yes, there was some because you were still dealing with a country where most decisions were being made by government organizations. Therefore, companies needed their government's support. In parallel with that was a very close cooperation in trying to understand what was going on inside China because it was not a transparent decision-making process. When a German delegation would get access to certain people that no American delegation had been able to meet, you would trade notes with the Germans about what that particular person had said and then compare it to what other people in other parts of the Chinese bureaucracy were saying to Americans. The aim was to piece together this picture of who was promoting what kind of reform and who was trying to delay which kinds of reforms to get a picture of where things were going over the long term.

Q: Did the academic world in the United States and elsewhere play much of a role as far as its understanding. I mean we'd had academics of looking and reading stuff about China for eons practically, but was there much, any relationship with them?

BROWN: The place that I would say the embassy got the most insight was from the World Bank. They Bank had been asked by the Chinese to come in and do a study of how reforms could be promoted. One of the first things I read before I went was a World Bank report that was literally a foot high. It had been written by economists who had been given access to information, data, statistics, about the Chinese economy, access to people who were involved in the planning process that went beyond what anyone else had. The Bank was perceived as constructive and it had large amounts of assistance to make available. The Chinese had to let them inside the tent so to speak in order to get that money.

Q: Was the Soviet Union a player in the game at this point?

BROWN: They had in this period still very tense relationships with the Chinese. The whole process of "normalizing" after the Sino-Soviet split had not taken place at this point. The Soviets did have their old state trading relationship. One did try to learn from their window of access into China, but they were not a big player. I think, to look back in retrospect, it was the problems at the beginning of the Reagan administration and the uncertainties about what the U.S. was going to do with Taiwan that began to get the Chinese thinking about moving towards a more independent foreign policy, i.e., one that wasn't so aligned with the U.S. against the Soviets but was more independent. You heard some of that rhetoric when I was there, but it wasn't until the end of the '80s that that all coalesced.

Q: Did the Taiwan issue come up every time you sat down and talked with Chinese?

BROWN: On the economic side, rarely. One exception was the civil aviation negotiations, as I said.

Q: What about while you were there dealing with the problem of corruption, of payoffs and all that?

BROWN: Not a huge issue at that time, yes some companies felt they had to do some things like this, but it was not a big issue in 1982.

Q: Did we get involved in the problem of I'm trying to think of the term, but when you're publishing pirated things.

BROWN: IPR. Intellectual property rights.

Q: Yes. Was that an issue?

BROWN: I don't recall it as an issue, it may have been, but I don't recall it at that time.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

BROWN: Arthur Hummel was Ambassador and the DCM was Chas Freeman.

Q: Dealing with, I'm just thinking of going back where we started, before you went to the Atomic Energy Agency, you were dealing with Taiwan, was Chas Freeman, was he there at that time?

BROWN: I replaced Chas on the Republic of China desk. He had been Burt Levin's deputy and I took his place.

Q: Well, he's quite a character in a way, isn't he?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: I interviewed him and it was almost I mean he, from memory or just sort of dictated practically his.

BROWN: Yes. He has an extraordinary memory. He is sort of a modern version of Teddy Roosevelt. He reads voraciously, remembers everything, intellectually very dynamic, very strong willed, he knows what he wants to do. He and I live across the hall from each other. So every morning I would ride to work with Chas. Every morning he would try to tell me what to do during my day.

Q: Oh, I can believe that. What about living in Beijing in those days? You had a family, how big was your family?

BROWN: Erna and I had two small kids.

Q: How was it?

BROWN: We loved it. As I said we could travel, not just officially, but privately, Erna and the kids and I went on numerous trips around China. You could go to restaurants. You could go visit temples. You could go and drive your car out 20 miles into the countryside before you ran into the little signs saying that diplomats weren't permitted to drive any farther without a permit. You could get permits to go further a field. We could go to Beidaihe on the coast in the summertime. We traveled down the Yangtze River and went through the three gorges and into Inner Mongolia. It was a delightful time to be there.

Q: How about apartment living and all that, how was that?

BROWN: On average, when you arrived at the beginning of a two years assignment, you spent about five to six months in a hotel waiting for an apartment because the Chinese government hadn't built enough to deal with a rapidly expanding diplomatic corps. That was very unpleasant. Once you got into your apartment and got used to the fact that you were living on a diplomatic compound, you could travel around the city very freely. You could get on your bicycle and go anywhere you wanted. We took bike tours out to the Ming tombs. You could drive to the Great Wall. You could go to the Forbidden City. You could go into art galleries and antique stores. It was a fine time. A small school was operated in the back of the embassy compound with about 100 kids. It had gotten to the point where you didn't have to worry about educating your children when you were serving in Beijing because of this.

Q: Art Hummel of course way back he'd grown up in China. How was he as ambassador?

BROWN: A wonderful man. Easy to work for. Of course most of my work was with Chas and Chas wasn't so easy to work for, but Art was a delight as was his wife, Betty Lou Hummel who worked very hard to maintain morale amongst the embassy staff.

Q: How did he, Art Hummel, did he seem frustrated in dealing with the Chinese bureaucracy and all?

BROWN: Art was a taciturn individual who didn't open himself up a great deal. He was very supportive if you had a problem you could get time with him. He would listen and he would give you his advice, which was usually good advice. He was wrestling the most of the time I was there with this whole arms sale thing and how to work this out. There were only four people in the embassy who were involved in this. They held it very tightly because of its sensitivity. If he got angry and frustrated in that process it didn't wash off on the rest of us.

I might say it's funny how certain things stick in your mind. Dick Nixon came to China while we were there. It would have been in '82, early '83 and spent two or three days there. I very much recall that four or five of us spent about two hours discussing U.S.-China relations with him. Nixon said what was music to the ears of the economic section. He was convinced that things were changing in U.S.-China relations and that in the future it was going to be, the economic relationship that would become the real underpinning of the relationship, not opposition to the Soviets. I remember that because he was the architect a decade earlier of the opening to China, basing it largely on opposition to the Soviets. Nixon was thinking ahead and recognizing that over the long-term economics would be very much the center of U.S.-China relations. I'm not a great fan of Richard Nixon, but he impressed us that night.

Q: Well, it's interesting. People I've talked to on a series of these interviews, Nixon basically impressed most of them by knowing, by both knowing the situation, but also by thinking ahead, but also by listening to people. I mean when he was in the outs and traveled around he used to sit there and talk for hours and have a yellow pad and he'd be taking notes.

BROWN: That two-hour session that we had with him would be an example of that.

Q: Yes.

BROWN: We didn't ask for that meeting. He asked for it.

Q: What about delegations? China has always fascinated Americans and I would think that you would find yourself deluged with political types and other types coming there just to see the elephant kind of.

BROWN: Well, that's true. There was what we called "death by duck." Every delegation that came Beijing had to go to the Peking Duck Restaurant for a formal dinner either hosted by its Chinese host or, if they didn't take care of it, the embassy was expected to make the arrangements. So, we went to duck dinners about twice a week for the two years I was there. Delegations were a very important part of what we were doing. They were the way deals were sealed and the way you got access to senior leaders in the Chinese government. Art Hummel could get access once in a while to senior leaders, but much of his access came when he accompanied high level delegations that would get calls on Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang or other leaders.

Q: Then were there any sort of incidents or problems or things that you haven't mentioned here that particularly strike you while you were there?

BROWN: One thing that was interesting was an issue called the Hu-Kuang railway bonds. These were bonds that had been issued just before the Chinese Revolution in 1911. Some American speculators had bought up these depreciated bonds. After we normalized relations with China, the speculators tried to hold the Chinese government legally responsible for the prior obligations of all former Chinese governments.

Q: This is tape four, side one with David Brown. Yes?

BROWN: We were talking about the Hu-Kuang railway bonds. These bonds were almost 70 years old and nothing had been paid on them for decades. After normalization, the American bondholders went to court to compel the Chinese communist government to accept responsibility for repayment of these loans. A court case was started I think in Georgia. The U.S. government had to persuade the Chinese government that they should go into U.S. court and make the arguments that they were not legally bound to repay these debts of the Qing Dynasty. When this came up you got an almost instinctive political reaction from the Chinese. Hell no, we're not going to subject China to the jurisdiction of American courts on these debts. We tried to explain to them, with the help of a delegation led by the Department's Legal Advisor, why they had to go into U.S. courts. If they didn't go into the U.S. courts, then the court might well grant the bondholders' request. Then when the next Chinese aircraft arrived in the United States the bondholders might put a lien on it for repayment on the bonds. When the U.S. delegation arrived to have the discussions with the Chinese legal experts, who were they? They were people who had studied law in the West in the 1930s. People who had been on the outs for years; many of them were vilified during the Cultural Revolution. But, China didn't have any other legal experts. While I was there we never persuaded the Chinese to go into court. Fortunately, the Chinese later did go into court and did make the case and the courts decided that the American bondholders didn't have any claims in this particular instance. The issue is not entirely dead however because I have heard that there are still some of the bondholders trying to make another run at the issue now.

Q: You know, for years we used to hear about the Czarist war bonds and I guess it is the same thing.

BROWN: Yes, the same kind of thing.

Q: Okay, well, you left Beijing in '83, whither?

BROWN: We went to Norway.

Q: Norway, oh my God.

BROWN: There was a very simple reason why I would want to go to Norway and that is because my wife is Norwegian and had worked in the Norwegian diplomatic service. We had two young children and we wanted to expose them to that side of their cultural heritage. A lot of luck was involved in getting an assignment to be the head of the political section in Oslo. But I was successful in part because I had taught myself some Norwegian and taken the language test at FSI to prove that while transiting Washington on the way to China. We stayed in Oslo for three years and in the last year I got to be DCM.

Q: So, you were there from '83 to '86. What were relations with Norway when you went there?

BROWN: Relations with Norway are normally quite trouble free. It's one of the easiest relationships we have in the world not because our countries are identical by any stretch of the imagination. It's hard to see too many parallels between Norway and its view of the world and the U.S. view of the world, but it's just a very harmonious relationship. The big issue while I was there was intermediate nuclear forces, INF. This was taking place against the backdrop in Norway of a period when the country was ruled by a center-right coalition government led by the Conservative Party. So, we had in office people who were relatively well disposed towards the United States and towards cooperation with the U.S. Nevertheless, the INF issue was a challenge. If you remember the INF debate for several years really dominated U.S. European relations.

Q: Just in context the Soviets have introduced an intermediate missile the SS20 and the idea of that, that put Europe under the gun, but not the United States under the gun and we were going to respond with intermediate missiles and cruise missiles.

BROWN: Right and deploy those INF missiles in Europe and do so in a way that many in Europe thought was going to increase East-West tensions rather than reduce them. The challenge was both to persuade people that the Soviet missiles were a real additional threat and that the deployment of U.S. missiles in Europe was the way to deal with that threat. So, that I would say was the biggest political issue in the three years I was there, and it split the Norwegians. The issue became linked with Reagan's strategic defense initiative, SDI. Both of the issues were acceptable to conservatives in Norway and but appalled those on the center and left side of the political spectrum. As I said, for most of my tenure, there was a center-right government in Norway and relations with them were quite cooperative and collaborative. What we had to do was try and sell U.S. views on INF and then subsequently on SDI in as sophisticated to the Norwegian public to make it easier for the government to maintain political support for supporting U.S. policy.

Q: Were you there, were the conservatives in control the whole time you were there?

BROWN: No. Labor came back in. I can't remember exactly when, but I think for the last year I was there a Labor government was in office.

Q: Now, did that make a difference?

BROWN: It made a difference because the Labor people were much more skeptical about both of these programs, which they saw as moving Europe in the wrong direction. They believe that Europe was changing, or at least had the potential to move in a different direction. This was before the Berlin Wall collapsed, three or four years before that, but there was a sense with the Helsinki process, that Europe East and West was changing and that there were opportunities here to build bridges. Also both SDI and INF were seen as efforts by a conservative American government, not to build bridges with the Soviet Union, but to confront and overpower the Soviet Union. So, it was a very hard sell with the Labor Party side that either one of these programs were really in Europe's interests.

Q: Who was our ambassador while you were there?

BROWN: Well, this a tale of two ambassadors. One appalling and one very good. The appalling one was Mark Evans Austad and the very good one was Robert Stuart. Mark Evans Austad as the name implies was a man of Norwegian descent, a Mormon who had done his Mormon mission work as a youth in Norway in the '30s in a period when Hitler was rising in Germany. He was a profoundly conservative man who was convinced that the Labor Party and the left of the Norwegian political spectrum were the equivalent of Chamberlain in the '30s. That these were naive idealists who had no comprehension of the real danger of the Soviet Union. He'd been through this before because he'd been in Norway at the time of appeasement of Nazism in Europe and so he just had it in for the left in Norway. This was eventually his undoing or part of his undoing. He attacked them so vigorously. Even Conservatives in Norway thought that he was being obsessive and acting in a way that was inappropriate for an American ambassador.

His problems were compounded by his personal weaknesses. One weakness was alcohol, which was particularly hard for a Mormon to admit. He had one absolutely horrendous incident when he went up to Northern Norway for an embassy arranged trip. The officer who was stationed in Northern Norway at the time took him around for the day and then to dinner and eventually to a bar. At about 11:00, the officer decided that he had had enough and Ambassador Austad in the bar.

Well, the next day or later that night, Ambassador Austad went to visit an old friend. This was at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. He was drunk and by mistake he went to the house next door to his friend's house and pounded on the door yelling and screaming and woke up the people in the house. The neighbors eventually called the police who came to arrest him for disorderly conduct. The Ambassador then threatened the police that he was the American ambassador and that if they arrested him he was going to bring the wrath of America down on little Norway. This was a very unpleasant incident for the embassy. Ambassador Austad tried to insist that the embassy go up and threaten the local police to expunge all of this from the records, the police reports. He convinced himself that this was all a leftist plot against him. He tried to write articles to be published in conservative media in the States blaming this incident on leftists in Norway.

I think a large part of it was that as a Mormon he just couldn't admit that he had a drinking problem. This incident combined with his more considered attacks on the labor politicians eventually led to a two hour debate in the Norwegian Storting about his performance as American ambassador and whether it was appropriate for any ambassador to be saying the kinds of things that he was saying. This brought the issue to a head in Washington, and Reagan decided to recall him.

Q: Where was his power, why was he a political appointee?

BROWN: He was a political appointee who had been ambassador to Finland and had apparently done a reasonably good job there during the first Reagan administration. He was appointed in the second Reagan administration as ambassador to Norway. His tenure was very painful for people in the embassy.

Q: How did you handle this I mean, you know, you realize you've got a problem here, but with a political appointee it's not let's call the inspectors in and all. I mean, but were the inspectors called?

BROWN: No. It went on at two levels. One was informally between the DCM; a real gentleman named Ron Woods, who lives up in Seattle now. Woods Did a lot of back channel over the telephone description to what was going on to people in Washington. The other level was formal reporting, that we had to handle carefully. We report what was in the Norwegian press and we made sure that everything was translated by our locals and then cabled or faxed back to Washington so that they would have the record. In particular, I remember reporting thoroughly on the Storting debate and the press commentary that followed. I had been tipped off that the debate was planned. So, as political counselor I went down and took copious notes for reporting. Then subsequently I actually got the transcript from the Norwegian Storting and had the whole thing translated into English and sent back to Washington.

Q: Did he approve this?

BROWN: Well, some of the things he knew we were doing, but with Woods blessing I signed the reports out. Other things he was unaware of, such as the transcript of the Storting debate. We were trying to build a case in Washington for his recall, to do it by letting the Ambassador hang himself and to do this without Ron Woods actually being thrown out. Fortunately it all worked out.

Then the irony of this was that he was replaced by Robert Stuart who had been the chairman of Quaker Oats. A fine man but one who had no connection to Norway before his nomination. I can remember taking his biography and the agreement request to the Foreign Ministry. The chief of protocol to whom I was giving this and who was a very good friend, said, "What are you Americans doing sending us another one of these people who know nothing about Norway?" I said, "Well, we just had one that claimed to know a lot. Why don't you give this guy a chance and see how he works out?" Actually Robert Stuart worked out extraordinarily well.

Q: Did they know that his background is a student at Yale he helped follow the American First Committee? As a student he got the America First going.

BROWN: That part of his life I had not been aware of. He was a conservative man. He encouraged all of us in the embassy to read the Wall Street Journal, which I do, but he was a great proponent of the editorial page of the Wall Street Journal. Yet, he was a very sophisticated man who listened to his staff. He was there during the transfer of government from the Conservatives to the Labor Party. He had worked with us after he arrived to build bridges to the Labor Party. So he knew them and had developed personal relationships with Gro Harlem Bruntland before she returned to office as Prime Minister. Stuart was a marvelous ambassador who has kept up his ties with Norway after retiring. He has sponsored scholarships for students to be exchanged between the two countries and ended up marrying a Norwegian, as you know after his first wife passed away. He started from ground zero with no real credentials or qualifications. While most American ambassadors to Oslo have something in their background that links them to Scandinavia, and Stuart had no ties and proved to be one of the most effective ambassadors we had.

Q: How did the while you were there the intermediate force issue play out or did it play out?

BROWN: Well, first of all, none of these missiles were being deployed in Norway. So, while Norway was thus on the periphery of the issue, they were a member of NATO and had to be part of the decision making process. They had to go along with deployments and the government had to be able to explain what it was doing to its public. In the end we got through all these issues.

Q: How did we view the Norwegian relations with Sweden because Sweden for a long time was playing the usual card and relations weren't great with the United States for a considerable period? I don't know how they were at that time.

BROWN: I don't recall any serious issues like the ones under Palme during the Vietnam War. My recollection is that we saw these relationships as a constructive element in Nordic cooperation that did not directly affect U.S. relations with either country.

Q: Were there any concerns about the Soviet presence in the Kola Peninsula I mean that's obviously a very big, was a very big area for the Soviet nuclear submarines.

BROWN: We had a very important and cooperative intelligence relationship with the Norwegian military that was very much focused on keeping track of the comings and goings of the Soviet fleet. So, that was one aspect of it. Another aspect had to do with Soviet interest in this very northern part of Europe, particularly in Svalbard which is an island north of the Nordic Peninsula which is Norwegian territory but covered by an international agreement that date way back to the '20s under which the Soviets have coal mining rights on the eastern half of that island. There was a fair amount of attention to how the Soviets were putting pressure on the Norwegians in Svalbard. What were they doing up there and were the Norwegians vigorously asserting their sovereignty in trying to keep an eye on what the Soviets were doing.

Then while I was there, there was a major spy case. A man named Arne Treholt who was a legal expert in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry was found to have been on the Soviet payroll. It shocked Norway that one of their bright well-connected young officials was working for the Soviets for so long. He had had a public image as an earnest person trying to find ways to build bridges with the Soviet Union and to deal with issues in a way that was cooperative rather than confrontational. This fit right into the leftist view of what Norway ought to be doing. Low and behold one of their best and brightest was found to be on the Soviet payroll.

Q: Was this something that you just observed or stay out of?

BROWN: The Norwegians handled the investigation, arrest and trial.

Q: How about Norwegian oil? Did that give Norway the ability to sort of distance themselves or go its own way if it wanted to?

BROWN: Yes, with respect to Europe. North Sea oil was booming while we were there. This was an important element in U.S.-Norwegian economic relations. American companies were involved in developing some fields. Yes, you're right, it had a big impact on Norway's perception of its role in the world. Before our arrival, Norway had held its first referendum on joining the European Union and voted against joining. The second referendum, also against joining, was in the 1990s after we had left. I think that a major part factor that made Norwegians comfortable in staying out of the EU was its oil. While we were there we were watching the beginning of the debate in Norway about whether there should be a second referendum.

Q: Did we have a feeling about this?

BROWN: Naturally, this was an issue for Norway to decide. Nevertheless, we thought it would be sensible for Norway to be part of Europe. This could help consolidate its relationship with NATO, which was important to the U.S. It might help with opening the Norwegian market in certain areas where they were quite protectionist. But the discussion was very preliminary and the second referendum didn't come until about a decade later.

Q: Did we look to Norway as an ally in dealing in the United Nations on issues?

BROWN: We would consult with them a lot and generally felt that they were supportive.

Q: How about whaling?

BROWN: I shouldn't be flippant in my next comment. Whales and apples and turkeys were examples of the kinds of issues the embassy had to manage. With the exception of INF and SDI, which were important political issues, there were not many other significant issues. Whaling was one of them.

Q: Could you explain what the issue was?

BROWN: Well, environmental groups in the United States were convinced that the global moratorium on whaling ought to be maintained. Norway had a traditional whaling fishery that was quite important to the people along the coast. It involved a relatively small whale, the minke whale, not one of the behemoths that are in the public mind. Norwegians were convinced that the minke whale was not in danger. There were tens of thousands of these whales, and the Norwegian whaling effort would not imperil this particular whale's existence. The issue recurred each year. It had to be managed, because it couldn't be solved to everyone's satisfaction. The Norwegians did start a limited "research" program on how the stock was doing. They would of course then sell the meat domestically, but not export it. At least that's my recollection of what they were doing at that time.

Q: Turkeys and apples?

BROWN: Apples were a product, which we thought we could sell into the Norwegian market. This was a market where Norway had a small number of apple growers who received protection in part to protect small rural communities. The Norwegian government was concerned about maintaining employment in rural areas and that was the basis of a lot of Norwegian protectionism. Apples happened to be a commodity that we thought we could export to Norway if they weren't so protectionist.

The turkeys came up at Thanksgiving because there was a blanket ban on the importation of American turkeys into Norway. So, what do you do at Thanksgiving and Christmas? We were always trying to work deals to bring in a limited number of turkeys for Americans at the NATO base and at the embassy. If we could do that, couldn't we also bring in enough for others in the American community?

Q: Well, what was the problem with the turkeys?

BROWN: The ban on the importation of turkeys, if I recall it correctly, was designed to protect chicken producers. Anyway, it was a delightful time. It was one of the best assignments that my family and I had and in '86 it had to come to an end.

Q: Okay, well, I think this is a good place to stop. '86, whither?

BROWN: Then I went back to the Department, to the Taiwan Coordination Staff, which was the new name for the old Republic of China desk.

Q: Okay, well, we'll pick that up in '86 then. Great.

Today is the 8th of April 2003. David, you've gone in 1986 to deal with the Republic of China or what did we call it then?

BROWN: Well, the government calls itself the Republic of China. We call the office that we set up in the State Department to deal with them after derecognition the Taiwan Coordination Staff.

Q: You were there from '86 to?

BROWN: '89.

Q: '89. All right, well, what I think it behooves you to explain a bit about how we dealt with Taiwan at this time.

BROWN: Right. In January of 1979, we had recognized China and derecognized Taiwan. This was shortly after I had left the Office of Republic of China Affairs in '78. We set up an unofficial organization to represent the American people in Taiwan called the American Institute in Taiwan. AIT had a headquarters office in Washington and an office in Taipei and another one in Kaohsiung in the southern part of Taiwan. We had a small office within the State Department building whose job was to develop policy and provide instructions to AIT.

Q: Well, now which one did you belong to?

BROWN: I belonged to the policy office within the State Department. The office of the Taiwan Coordination Staff.

Q: Now in the State Department did this function in all aspects as a desk?

BROWN: Yes, except that there was no other desk that had an unofficial organization in Washington to conduct liaison on its behalf. Whenever a prominent visitor from Taiwan arrived, it was the chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan office in Washington, D.C. who was responsible for greeting them and going to dinner with them and chairing unofficial meetings for those visitors with people from the administration.

Q: It sounds like a term that is used in illicit relationships as a beard.

BROWN: Or a front group.

Q: A front group. However, that did not mean we were cutting Taiwan loose. American interests in Taiwan changed little.

BROWN: Absolutely. If you look back at decade of the 1980s after de-recognition, this was a period of great success and development for Taiwan. Relations with the U.S., though unofficial, were quite stable and strong. In short, Taiwan continued to enjoy the stability that it needed to prosper and develop.

Q: Okay, in 1986 when you went there, what was the situation on Taiwan economically and politically in 1986?

BROWN: Well, there were the two big economic issues in U.S.-Taiwan relations then. Taiwan enjoyed huge trade surplus with the United States in the mid-1980s. One issue was should Taiwan continue to benefit from our general system of preferences (GSP) when they were a remarkably powerful export economy. At that time, Taiwan's GDP per capita was around \$10,000. Should Taiwan be graduated out of a program that was designed to benefit developing countries?

The other issue involved the valuation of Taiwan's currency, the new Taiwan dollar. Their currency was very carefully controlled, and Treasury was convinced that Taipei was using their currency control system to maintain an undervalued new Taiwan dollar. The undervaluation was seen as a major reason for their massive trade surplus with the U.S. The Treasury Department and we on the desk cooperated in pressuring the Taiwan government into appreciating the currency. There were some interesting unintended consequences of doing this. What Treasury did was to persuade Taiwan that its economy had matured to the point where Taiwan could afford to remove some of its currency controls and allow people in Taiwan to move currency in and out more freely. The by-product of this was that after these currency reforms were put in place Taiwanese started to invest overseas. They invested in the U.S., in Southeast Asia. However, the big thing that no one had anticipated was Taiwanese started to invest in China. That began to open up relations between the island and the mainland.

Q: What about the result of this sort of freeing the Taiwanese to invest where they will? Was anybody looking at this in the East Asian bureau saying this is a good thing? In fact, it probably was one of the greatest determiners of the China-Taiwan relationship. If China gets too huffy, it may jeopardize all the nice investment.

BROWN: We were thinking about it, but I certainly didn't anticipate the extent to which Taiwan's investment in China would take off. We knew that President Chiang Ching-kuo had made a major decision to allow people from Taiwan to travel to the mainland. It happened that he did that some months before with the 15th anniversary of the Shanghai Communiqué<sup>1/2</sup>. We knew that this opening up of travel to China was a very important thing that would have long-term consequences. Secretary Shultz took the occasion of the 15th anniversary to make a statement in which we said that it was U.S. policy not to get involved in cross-strait negotiations, but to encourage an environment in which such cross-strait contacts could develop. We understood there was a process going on that was very important. However, I for one certainly didn't understand that what we were doing with Treasury to open Taiwan's exchange rate system for the purpose of correcting our trade deficit would have the side effect of stimulating massive foreign direct investment by Taiwan and that a good portion of that foreign direct investment would go to China.

Q: You didn't have to go through the resignation process or something like that?

BROWN: Well, I was working in the State Department, so no, I did not. People who worked for AIT, whether they were working in Taipei or in Washington, had to go through a process of resignation from the State Department and employment with the American Institute in Taiwan.

Q: Could the AIT people come at will to the State Department?

BROWN: Yes. However, Taiwan's representatives and visiting officials could not come to the State Department. The American employees of AIT came to State like any other government employee. They had their own State Department badges. What was important was that appearances were changed. They were publicly called AIT employees. The appearance or form of our relations with Taiwan changed, but the substance did not change much. As for AIT employees, they continued to get their paychecks in exactly the same fashion they'd gotten them before from the Department. Every one of them had employee evaluations. When I was on the coordination staff, some AIT employees received State Department awards.

Q: What piece of the action did you have?

BROWN: Well, it was policy guidance. How was the relationship with Taiwan conducted? This was a big part of our role in the exchange rate issue. Normally Treasury doesn't let State have anything to do with exchange rate negotiations. An ambassador is lucky if he knows that they're even taking place. But because Treasury was aware that they couldn't send their senior officials to Taipei, they had to come to us to work out ways to deal with Taiwan. Treasury did not let us in on the substance of their discussions, but we worked with them on the process, and that proved to be quite important. Who in Taiwan should Treasury deal with? Where can Treasury talk to them? Under what arrangements can we deal with them? What form can an agreement or understanding with Taiwan take? Those were issues on which we got involved. Also, Treasury had important relationships with China at the same time. They were very much involved in U.S. economic ties with the mainland. So, they didn't want to jeopardize those relationships any more than State wanted to. So, one question was: do you want to deal with exchange rates by sending a lower ranking official? If so, State could help make Taiwan understand that this person came with considerable authority if not rank. Did Treasury want to work this issue by inviting more senior officials from Taiwan to meet in San Francisco under some private guise? If so, State could help ensure that it was arranged quietly in a way that would not create problems for either Treasury or State in their dealings with Beijing.

Q: What about Taiwan? During the time you were dealing with this, were their intelligence efforts a problem, I mean looking at the overseas community? Because they messed around a bit in New York, I mean in Los Angeles I believe. How did we see it at that time you were doing it?

BROWN: The really egregious thing that happened took place two years before I came back to work on Taiwan. This was the murder of Henry Liu, a Taiwan journalist who had moved to the United States and had written a critical biography of Chiang Ching-kuo. Someone in the Taiwan intelligence chain of command decided that the way to deal with somebody who had criticized Chiang was to have him eliminated by gangsters of the so-called bamboo gang. Intelligence officers hired the bamboo gang to murder Henry Liu. It took a while for this to come to light. The U.S. had evidence on the involvement of intelligence officers in the murder, and this forced Taipei to address the issue of responsibility. The former head of Taiwan's intelligence service in the U.S. was convicted of involvement. It still is not clear how high up people were involved in the incident. President Chiang was acutely embarrassed. He eventually made very significant changes in his intel services. The murder was a huge black mark for Taiwan.

Now there were other things that they were doing, none of which were as egregious as that. Taiwan continued to surveil Chinese students in the United States. They had intelligence operations going and efforts to acquire restricted arms technology that we were not authorizing for sale. The most serious example of that was a program to get inertial guidance for long range missiles from the U.S., technology that we had denied them. Taiwan arranged to have some of their scientists come to the U.S. and get training and then they picked up the designs. That had to be dealt with while I was on the desk. I recall we also put them on the FBI watch list for hostile foreign intelligence organizations. They got the message and over time changed the pattern of what they were doing.

Q: Well, let's take getting the long-range guidance system. You said that had to be dealt with, what did you do?

BROWN: Well, I recall that the most important thing we did was to terminate visas for all the scientists that were involved in the training program, send those people back to Taiwan and force the university that was running the program, which I recall was MIT, to terminate those programs which were inconsistent with U.S. policy.

Q: Were you allowed to have contact with the Taiwanese staff here in Washington?

BROWN: Yes, but not in the State Department building, I had frequent breakfasts, lunches and dinners with them. When circumstances required, AIT would arrange for a negotiation or signing of an agreement. We had no problem dealing with Taiwanese political groups that would come to the United States. We'd simply go to see them in a restaurant rather than in the State Department.

Q: It sounds like one would eat very well on that job.

BROWN: During much of that time, I was working for Gaston Sigur who was the Assistant secretary. Taiwan's representatives in Washington were Fred Chien and later Ding Mou-shih, both of whom went on to be foreign ministers. Whenever they had a meeting with Gaston, it was usually held over breakfast at the Four Seasons Hotel. We ate well and had a lot of pretty heavy conversations to go along with the fare.

Q: What was your impression of the nationalist Chinese representation here in Washington?

BROWN: We were fortunate to be dealing with quite sophisticated individuals. As would be expected, we were under steady pressure from them to make the relationship more official. For example, they would propose changing the kinds of license plates their offices and officials could use. Diplomatic plates were not possible, so they pressed local jurisdictions to create special plates for them. Taipei was always trying to get a pseudo official status for their offices. Could they fly their flag outside their office or just inside the office? What titles could their officers use? This was a period of booming trade between the U.S. and Taiwan. Many U.S. states wanted trade offices in Taiwan. Taiwan would be as generous possible in providing benefits and special privileges for those state representatives in Taipei, and then they would turn around and go to the state's governor and say they would like similar treatment in the U.S. Lacking formal diplomatic recognition, Taiwan had a deep desire for the most formal treatment they could persuade people to give them. Dealing with this, and coordinating with local governments was a constant challenge. It wasn't done in a mean spirited way, but we had to hold the line on the unofficial nature of our relationship.

Q: What about consular protection? I'm thinking of all the Taiwanese students in the United States and visitors and businessmen and the normal thing is you need I'm in trouble with the police or something, call you consul.

BROWN: We had the American Institute in Taiwan represent us in Taipei. Taipei had an organization with a convoluted name called the Coordination Council for North American Affairs (CCNAA) to represent Taiwan in exactly the same way in the United States. They had an office in Washington and about 11 or 12 branch offices in American cities. In one of the more mean spirited aspects of switching relations, we told Taiwan, a country which had more consulates, formal consulates as opposed to honorary consulates, than just about any other country in the U.S. that several of these consulates had to be closed. This was one of the things that would have to change with the termination of diplomatic relations. So, we squeezed them down from 16 to 12, I recall. Nevertheless they retained a very extensive network of CCNAA offices around the country that operated exactly like consulates except that they didn't have consular status. Their personnel enjoyed privileges and immunities similar to those accorded consular personnel. We had similar needs in Taiwan, so we wanted the arrangements to work effectively for both sides.

Q: When I interviewed Nat Belocchi and Nat was saying that if you think that the Israelis have a lobby or a network in the United States, wait until you run across the nationalist Chinese. How did you find it sort of business everywhere? Was this a pretty significant group?

BROWN: They were and are extremely active in cultivating good feelings amongst Americans toward Taiwan. They considered themselves a very vulnerable society and they recognize that the U.S. was their principal supporter. Hence, they did everything they could to cultivate friendship among Americans. I'm excluding from this the intelligence operations, and talking just about legitimate diplomacy. Under our international visitor program, we would bring 15 or 20 people a year from Taiwan for month long visits to expose them to American society, just as we did everywhere else. Similarly Taipei was targeting people who would 20 years later be in leadership positions in the U.S. But, Taiwan had programs, which were much larger than ours. They were bringing hundreds of people to Taiwan every year, through every conceivable kind of arrangement. At one level they were inviting members of congress. They had an extensive program of congressional staff visits. They did the same thing at the state level working through their local offices. They were inviting state legislators, staff members of state governments, staffs of governors around the country. They had an operation with the democratic and republican parties where political parties in Taiwan, mainly the KMT, would invite delegations from those party organizations at the national levels and at the state levels to Taiwan. They had visits from professional groups; they had visits from academics. Then when the visitors came back, CCNAA would follow up, maintain contact and seek these people's help. Their friends are never forgotten. They are always invited to lunches and dinners and parties when visiting delegations come the connections are kept up so that a massive effort to cultivate good will and support in this country for Taiwan because Taiwan is so dependent on American political and military support. Then when help was needed, Taiwan was not shy in asking for it.

What was and is different is that Israel had a large and active domestic political lobby in the Jewish community. While the Chinese community in the U.S. was growing, it was not politically active and was split between pro-Beijing, Pro-KMT and Taiwan independence groups.

Q: Did you find a sense of unease in the East Asian bureau? Were the people dealing with China per se because I mean just looking at it from the outside, here is this active office doing this thing making cultivating, also the fact is that Taiwan was turning into a democracy. When you say democracy, this rings all sorts of bells in the United States and it was not a fake one. I mean this is a real thing and yet you know, you had China, which wasn't going in that direction at all. Sort of almost a frustration or something of the Mainland China hands within our State Department kind of wishing you'd go away or something like that?

BROWN: We'll things were different in the mid-1980s. I think the phenomena you're describing are of the '90s. Why do I say that? First because in the mid-'80s the democratic transformation in Taiwan was only just beginning. There still were political prisoners from the Kaohsiung incident in jail. There were more congressional hearings on human rights in Taiwan. The real process of political reform in Taiwan began actually in 1986 but wasn't completed until much later with the first direct election of the Taiwan president in 1996 and the first transfer of power to the opposition in 2000. In '86, '87, '88 this process was just beginning. On the mainland, it was a period when economic reform was seen in this country as promising. There were student demonstrations in China in 1987 that were significant enough to cost party Secretary General Hu Yaobang his job. So, the contrast between what was going on in the mainland and what was going on in Taiwan wasn't as stark then as it was later.

Q: So, when you were dealing with it both countries sort of seemed to be on a mild trajectory toward the better?

BROWN: You could say that before Tiananmen.

Q: Did you feel, was there still this almost coterie who had participated in the opening to China who identified so much with mainland China that they tended to be dismissive or forget about Taiwan? I mean was that still an attitude or did this work itself out?

BROWN: At that time, the Republican administration had good relations with Taiwan and quite positive attitudes toward the island. Taiwan felt that it was well connected with the Reagan and subsequently with the Bush establishments in Washington. Holbrooke had been dismissive of Taiwan, but the Republican administrations were not. The first person I worked for was Jim Lilley who had been our representative, the head of AIT in Taipei. He believed that if you wanted to manage the U.S.-China relationship as a whole correctly you had to take very good care of your ties in Taiwan. If one didn't take good care of the ties in Taiwan then the Taiwanese were going to use this network that they had cultivated, most importantly in the congress, to put pressure on the administration to do things that would not be in the U.S. interest.

Q: You were there at least in the beginning of the transition between the Reagan and Bush administration and you know, often within an administration between two different parts of the same party the transition sometimes gets a little bit rocky. How did this one go regarding your area?

BROWN: From my perspective there were no serious problems.

Q: How about arms sales? Was this something you were dealing with all the time?

BROWN: All the time, and we were going through all sorts of shenanigans you might call them to provide Taiwan with the weapons it needed in ways that did not provoke the PRC and also, to the best of our ability, could be seen as consistent with the language of the communiqué<sup>1/2</sup> that had been negotiated with the Chinese in 1982. The August '82 communiqué<sup>1/2</sup> on arms sales said that there were limits on the quantity and quality of arms we would sell to Taiwan. So, we had to try and live within that framework, but the framework was being stretched beyond credibility by technological change. Taiwan's weapons systems were becoming obsolescent and had to be replaced and the only way you could replace them was by providing newer more capable systems. Subsequently, after I left, we bumped up against the quantitative ceiling as well as the qualitative one with the sale of F-16s. The F-16s clearly were a more capable system, and they were so expensive that there was no way they could be provided within the quantitative limitations either.

Q: Was there somebody sitting there or some bodies sitting there in the Pentagon figuring out what the mainland Chinese had in the way of aircraft, navy, etc. and what the Taiwanese had and making sure that the Taiwanese were able to have a credible defense?

BROWN: Sure. Studies were done of the military balance in the Taiwan straits. State, DOD and NSC had to weigh what could be sold that would meet Taiwan's legitimate defense needs and how to do it in a way that would not create problems in our relations with the PRC. One key was to keep what we were doing out of the public eye. Appearances were important to the PRC. Consequently, what systems were called was important. For instance, Taiwan wanted the M-60 tank. We sold them an equivalent but called it a hybrid M-48, the M-48H. I'm using an army system here as an example, though it was not the most important weapon we were selling Taiwan. I could have used the frigate that we had agreed to sell. In that case, we devised a program whereby Taiwan could manufacture in Taiwan new frigates that were better than the old World War II vintage ones that were being replaced. Clearly this would involve a qualitative improvement. Rather than selling them these ships outright in a way that would be seen as a violation of the arms sales communiqué<sup>1/2</sup>, we worked out an arrangement to provide the plans and build the ships in Taiwan. These ships would then be outfitted with modern weapons systems. This met their defense needs with less strain on our relations with China.

Q: What about other countries on this arms thing? Could you say the French and all, were they and other countries, were the Taiwanese shopping around?

BROWN: Taiwan was out looking all the time, but very few countries were prepared to sell to them. The Israelis would provide some things. They got some systems from the Italians, and believe it or not from the Swedes. The sellers would try to handle the sales in a way that didn't attract publicity or create problems for their relations with China. The really big third country sale again came after I left. This was the French decision to sell frigates and 60 mirage fighters to Taiwan.

Q: Things were beginning to happen in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev was coming. Did that change the equation or was that felt?

BROWN: That didn't really have any impact.

Q: How about the Japanese? Did we see them as a rival or a supporter or how did we see the Japanese?

BROWN: Well, as an economic competitor in Taiwan. For a variety of reasons, Japan did not have any defense ties with Taiwan. Certainly on the political level, they kept a very low profile and were determined to avoid problems in their relations with the PRC.

Q: During this '86 to '89 period did you find, had the balance shifted from the mainlanders to the Taiwanese and speaking within the political system?

BROWN: In that context, the most important thing that happened followed the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988. Lee Teng-hui, the vice President, succeeded him and became the first Taiwanese to reach a real position of power in Taiwan. This was a revolutionary change. Most people at that time thought Lee was a lightweight who would not last. It was similar to the way people thought about Jiang Zemin when he was appointed General Secretary in Beijing.

Q: Or Anwar Sadat.

BROWN: Yes. Well, Lee transformed Taiwan politics and is still having a major impact now as a former president. However, in the years I was on the desk, he started very cautiously. He had to be careful because even though he inherited the presidency, he did not inherit automatically the chairmanship of the Nationalist Party. That was the really powerful position in the political system at that time. The first thing Lee had to do was to get himself appointed acting chairman of the party and that was in fact opposed by Chiang family loyalists, including Madame Chiang Kai-shek who was then in her late 80s. She had returned to Taiwan, in 1986 I think, out of concern that Chiang Ching-kuo might go too far in liberalizing the political system. She was there when he passed away. She, her son Chiang Wei-kuo and some others tried to prevent Lee from being given the title of acting chairman of the party. Reform elements in the party blocked that effort and Lee became acting chairman. Lee had to consolidate his position and prove to people that he was going to be around for a while. He moved forward with Ching-kuo's program for initial political reform and subsequently carried that process much further in the 1990s.

Q: Was this looked upon with favor in the United States?

BROWN: Oh, definitely. Washington's positive response went back to 1986 when Ching-kuo was beginning to signal his willingness to conduct political reform in Taiwan. His biggest signal was when opposition politicians defied the ban on new political parties and announced the formation of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). KMT conservatives urged Chiang to arrest them, but he told the conservatives that times were changing and this had to be accepted. So, that was the big signal that political reform was coming. Ching-kuo terminated martial law the following year and Taipei passed a civic organization's law that legalized new political parties. They also ended the ban on new newspapers, which had been used as a control mechanism of the press, opening up a much freer press environment. The process went on to a number of other steps, but led to in 2000, 14 years later, to a peaceful transfer of government from the KMT to a president representing the opposition DPP.

Q: Were there sort of a Taiwanese, I mean there must have been Taiwanese watchers in the mainland government at the embassy here. I was wondering whether you were picking up from your colleagues who were working with that embassy how they were viewing things in Taiwan.

BROWN: They were trying to figure out what this political transition meant. Did having a Taiwanese president mean that Beijing was going to face demands for Taiwan independence? How do you interpret the freer expression of opinion and the fact that Taiwanese were now free to advocate independence? What did this mean? Yes, there was a lot of interest. The Chinese Embassy was talking to various people around Washington, including those on the China desk. Occasionally either people from AIT in Washington or we on the Taiwan Coordination Staff would meet with Chinese diplomats. We didn't want to do it too often because our job was to deal with Taiwan, and Taipei was very sensitive about our contacts with the PRC. Nevertheless we did meet to make sure that the channels of communication were open and that the PRC accurately understood the way we saw what was happening.

Q: Were you seeing at this time a really positive direction towards everything or was this, did you see that probably the KMT would eventually be if not phased out, be having to compete for jobs and things like that?

BROWN: Yes, we foresaw that. However, it appeared that the KMT position remained strong. There was a debate among analysts about whether the KMT was going to be in effect another version of the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party, a permanent government party within a democratic system because the opposition could not get itself organized effectively to compete with it. The democratic transition had gone far enough by the time I left in '89 that that kind of debate was taking place.

Q: While you were dealing with Taiwan, were we ever called upon to steam the fleet or something from the seventh fleet up and down the Formosa Strait and that sort of thing?

BROWN: This was not the period of military confrontation in the Strait. I mean we had issues that we had to deal with because the Taiwan military and the PRC military were occasionally coming into close proximity of each other in the strait. In the mid 80s, the Taiwan military was still quite confident. They had higher quality systems and they would sometimes try to fly too close to the mainland and provoke the PRC. At times we had to warn Taiwan from doing that sort of thing.

Q: Quemoy and Matsu which were household names back in the '60s, what was happening with them?

BROWN: Very little. I mean there was some talk, in the context of Taipei's decision to open up travel to the mainland, about what role the offshore islands might play? Can something take place in terms of travel back and forth there? Intriguing questions, but in 1987 when travel to the mainland had just begun, it was too early for such a major change on the offshore islands.

Q: Were there ever any problems with mainland students and Taiwanese students at UCLA or where have you, what have you, at one of the universities?

BROWN: Not that I can recall. That was a period when PRC students were coming to the U.S. in large numbers, and there have long been thousands of Taiwanese on campuses as well, but I don't recall any significant problems.

Q: Did Taiwan make any noises during the 1988 election between Bush and Dukakis I guess it was about political contributions or anything like that?

BROWN: I don't recall a problem on that.

Q: You probably would have if there had been. When did you leave in '89?

BROWN: In July or August.

Q: How did you, you left just after the whole Tiananmen thing?

BROWN: That's right.

Q: This is tape five, side one with David Brown

BROWN: Yes, I had observed the drama of Tiananmen while still in Washington. The students in the square, the mass demonstrations of a kind that had never been seen before in Communist China, many ordinary citizens joining in, delegations from different ministries participating in the demonstrations. For a while, I believed this would lead to some very significant change. Then martial law was declared and the military suppressed the demonstrations.

In Taiwan, there was a lot of optimism that spring that real reform might occur in China. Then of course, when the crack down came, this bubble burst and the usual attacks on the communists resumed. What happened to cross-strait travel, trade and investment during this period is very interesting. Businessmen went to the mainland, business continued, investments continued, it was rather remarkable. After Tiananmen, when most of the world was reducing contacts and there was reluctance by many in the West to invest in China, to everyone's surprise Taiwanese investments just kept going pretty much as though nothing had happened. It was motivated by business opportunities and most of the investments were in the southern coastal part of China, which was not heavily affected by what was going on in Beijing.

Was Taiwan intelligence involved in trying to support the democracy movement in China during that April May period? We didn't have very much information on that at that time. Most of the external support from overseas Chinese seemed to be coming out of Hong Kong rather than Taipei. But how much came from Taiwan wasn't clear at the time.

Q: Were we, how did we feel about Taiwanese investment in China? I mean was this a good thing?

BROWN: A good thing, yes.

Q: So, we weren't concerned that they were making another competitor for us?

BROWN: No. You have to remember that this started slowly. There had been a certain amount of unacknowledged trade going on indirectly before the travel ban was lifted in '87. The volume was still modest and not in the high tech area. It was textiles and shoes and sportswear and products like that. Today if you look at the cross-strait trade it's a very different picture. It's a huge factor both for China and for Taiwan. It is very much tied into global IT trade.

Q: What about Taiwanese versus mainland diplomacy in Africa and other places? Was this at all sort of a battlefield while you were there?

BROWN: The diplomatic struggle was a constant phenomenon. I can't remember who lost and who won what in that particular period.

Q: Well, then, when you left there after Tiananmen, where did you go in '89?

BROWN: Before we leave, let me just come back to one other issue that was very important in those days and about which there have been reports subsequently in the public record. That is the question of non-proliferation in Taiwan.

Q: You're talking about non-proliferation?

BROWN: Well about the Taiwan effort to acquire nuclear weapons, which we talked about earlier when we discussed the period when I was on the desk in the '70s. We went through another bout of this. It was reported at the time that Taiwan formally shut down and disabled its research reactor in 1988. This was the reactor they had purchased from Canada in the 1960s. The other information in the public media was the defection to the United States in early 1988 of one of the deputy directors of the Taiwan Atomic Energy Commission. The circumstances were never very clear in the media under which this individual ended up in the United States, but the fact that he was here was reported at the time and it is in the public record now. Dealing with this issue was one of the most important things the U.S. did in this period. It was in a way cleaning up after our own mess. I say that because the impetus for getting back to an interest in nuclear weapons by the Taiwan military came after we switched relations and their sense of insecurity became very real. Things developed to the point that we had to discretely tell Taiwan that this reactor had to be shut down and disabled. That reactor was the core of the problem because it could be used in a weapons program. In the '70s we had agreed Taiwan could continue to operate it under IAEA safeguards and it just became apparent that that wasn't the smart policy.

Q: Well, how did the Taiwanese react?

BROWN: Well, there were only a very small number of people in Taiwan who were aware that this was an issue. They essentially were persuaded that their relations with the United States, with the Reagan and Bush administrations, were more important to their security than anything they might be thinking of doing in terms of developing a weapons capability of their own. The people who were involved in it saw that the better part of wisdom would be to shut down this reactor. This took place around the time that Chiang Ching-kuo passed away. The only thing known to the public was that the deputy director of the Atomic Energy Commission and his family had disappear from Taiwan and it was rumored gone to the United States. We were fortunate enough not to have congressional hearings on this, thanks to some careful briefings of key members, so there was no sort of public discussion of it in the United States either.

Q: When this director and family left, what was behind it?

BROWN: Well, I think I better leave it at that because I don't want to go beyond what is in the public record. I think you could put the pieces together you could assume that something he told us was significant in terms of our understanding of what was going on.

Q: I got you. Well, then '89, whither?

BROWN: To Hong Kong.

Q: You certainly were on an East Asian circuit weren't you?

BROWN: It's a wonderful part of the world.

Q: We used to have trouble. I know when I was in Saigon it was something known as China coasters. These were sailors who spent all their time; they wouldn't leave ships anywhere. I mean they just kept going up and down the China coast with literally a wife in every port. You were almost a China coaster then?

BROWN: Well that's an interesting way to put it. I wonder what my wife would say about that?

Q: You were in Hong Kong from when to when?

BROWN: '89 to '92.

Q: Interesting time.

BROWN: Very.

Q: What were you doing?

BROWN: I was the Deputy Consul General.

Q: Who was consul general then?

BROWN: At the beginning, it was Don Anderson and in the second two years it was Richard Williams.

Q: Richard?

BROWN: Williams. Dick Williams. You really ought to interview him.

Q: Where is he?

BROWN: He's retired in California now.

Q: Well, we might be able to do something. I've interviewed Anderson I think.

BROWN: Dick Williams has one of the best memories of anyone I have ever met. He can recall everything. So, he'd be great person to interview.

Q: Well, Hong Kong '89. You know Tiananmen had happened. The takeover was not that far away. What was the operative date?

BROWN: 1997.

Q: But it was a date that was well, everybody had it on their mind.

BROWN: Right. There were a lot of important negotiations going on between the British and the Chinese during this period. The most important being drafting what is called the Basic Law, which was the mini constitution that set the framework of how Hong Kong would run after its reversion to China.

Q: When you arrived there the aftermath of Tiananmen must have been... Things had been almost euphoric before. You weren't in Hong Kong, but coming there, this was a dose of communist reality, wasn't it?

BROWN: Right and the city was very nervous. You saw this in a variety of ways. You saw it in the growth of the Democratic Party in Hong Kong, which was just getting started. It was very much motivated by people who were determined to do as much as they could to protect Western values, civic society and promote democracy in Hong Kong, move it along as far as you can get it before the turnover, to provide some kind of a base of democratic politics in Hong Kong before the handover took place. You saw it in our own staff at the consulate, which was very nervous.

Q: You're talking about the Chinese staff.

BROWN: Yes, Chinese at the consulate. After reversion in 1997, if they were still working for the consulate, would they be considered as spies because of what they had done at the consulate? How were they going to be protected? You saw it in many different manifestations.

Q: Well, in a way well, I don't want to put words in your mouth. I mean what were we, the Hong Kong and the premiere observing spot of China, but now we have an embassy, we have the consulate generals. What was Hong Kong doing at this time?

BROWN: Well, we still had a mainland reporting unit as part of a combined political economic section. There were four people from the State Department component reporting on China. We had a large defense attaché's office, though it didn't have that title. Their focus was on the PLA in China and what could be learned about it both from sources in Hong Kong and by traveling around China in the guise of being tourists. Once in a while they got in a bit of trouble from what they were doing, but nothing egregious. Then there was a CIA station there, which was very heavily focused on what could be learned from Hong Kong about the mainland.

Q: Obviously were we at the time when we were looking at what the British were up to and you know, and also we're beginning to lay plans for what are we doing about Hong Kong? We might not be a player, but had our staff and everything else. What were we thinking about?

BROWN: In early '92, which was five years before the transition was to take place, at Washington's request, Beijing and Hong Kong did a joint study of what should the U.S. presence in Hong Kong be after reversion.

Q: This is our post in Beijing?

BROWN: Yes, our post, Embassy Beijing. Stape Roy, the ambassador at the time and Dick Williams, the CG, were the ones who oversaw the collective inputs as to what the nature of the relationship should be. Our recommendations were then sent to Washington. No decisions were made at that time, our recommendations were later largely followed when reversion occurred. Interestingly enough, there was no big difference of opinion between the Embassy and Consulate. It was agreed that the United States would have an interest in supporting the "high degree of autonomy" that Hong Kong was supposed to get and that therefore, the type of organization the U.S. should have in Hong Kong should be consistent with the concept of Hong Kong having a high degree of autonomy, i.e., it shouldn't be just another consulate in China. But a Consulate with more autonomy from the Embassy than is usual. Embassy Beijing agreed even then that the person who was in Hong Kong should be seen within the State Department as a chief of missions.

Q: In other words certainly we report directly to Washington.

BROWN: Yes, On all things that had to do with Hong Kong's autonomy, and simultaneously have a close liaison relationship with Beijing, but not be treated by Beijing in the same way that Shanghai, Guangzhou and the other consulates were treated.

Q: Well, this of course to somebody who isn't familiar with this extremely important because you could have a chief of mission in Beijing who would want to.

BROWN: Exert control.

Q: Exert control and all of a sudden a lot of disquieting reports came out of Hong Kong it would be tempting to sit on those or to do this. This way by just this reporting channel meant that you would be getting a certain analysis that did not have to go through the venting of the embassy. I mean this happens. We always have this problem if you have supervision. I mean that close supervision. So, it was really a very important decision.

BROWN: Yes. Right. When they made the decision at the time of reversion, that's the way it came out.

Q: Well, now, what were the things you were particularly concerned with?

BROWN: Well, one was to do everything we could to try and make sure that when the transition took place there was a basis for continuing to treat Hong Kong as an autonomous unit in terms of U.S. policy. There we had the cooperation of the Congress and particularly Congressman Porter who was on the House Human Rights Caucus and Senator McConnell.

McConnell and Porter took the lead in passing the Hong Kong Policy Act which essentially said the United States has a strong interest in Hong Kong's continuing autonomy under the Basic Law arrangements worked out with China. It will be U.S. policy to support that high degree of autonomy at the time. We will continue to deal with Hong Kong separately on things like immigration and customs and IPR.

Q: IPR?

BROWN: Intellectual property rights and export controls, textile agreements, all of these kinds of things would remain in place. Rather than reaching a pessimistic assumption about what would happen after reversion, this legislation said the opposite. We're going to treat Hong Kong separately so long as it has real autonomy. That was very important. In the process of doing that we also dealt with our employees' concerns in the sense of getting special provisions put into legislation. If at the time of transition any employees in the consulate wanted to, we would work out expeditious naturalization for them to get a visa on the basis of their employment at the consulate without waiting for the normal 30 years. It was a special set of provisions so that any member of the consulate who felt threatened could get a visa and go to the United States as an immigrant. In the end, very few people in the end took advantage of that provision, but the option was very important to our employees.

Q: What about were we getting good information from the British on how things were going?

BROWN: The British were pretty good. There was a debate in Hong Kong at that time as to whether the British were really looking after the interests of Hong Kong or whether they were simply being narrow minded British and only caring about British commercial interests. I happened to be one of the people who thought the British were doing a reasonably good job of looking after Hong Kong's interests. Of course, that gets you into the whole question about how you view of Chris Patten, the final British Governor.

Q: He wasn't there at your time?

BROWN: He came just as I was leaving. David Wilson, a career British Foreign Service officer as the governor when I was there, but just as I was leaving Patten replaced him. He had a very different approach. Anyway, we in the Consulate thought that the British were doing a pretty good job of ensuring that the provisions of the Joint British- Chinese Declaration were accurately translated into the new domestic Chinese legislation, the so-called Basic Law for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The British were pushing the Chinese to consult to a degree with the people of Hong Kong about what the content of what that law should be. The Chinese organized a basic law drafting committee, which had mainly mainland Chinese on it, but included a number of people from Hong Kong. These Hong Kong representatives were chosen by the Chinese, not by the Hong Kong people or by the British. There was an effort to pressure those Hong Kong representatives to stand up for Hong Kong and to have an open process where the texts of draft law were known not just to the British but also to the Hong Kong people and were debated in public. The British played a role in setting up that process. Some people it as only a sham consultation process because the Chinese appointed the members and others thought that this limited process was better than not having any role at all for Hong Kong. I was in that latter camp.

Q: Were we looking at that time did we want was Hong Kong as sort of an economic dynamo important to us? In other words, were we interested say beyond the fate of the people in Hong Kong, but just to have that, was that a good thing for us to have that there?

BROWN: Oh, definitely. It was not a perfect free market economy by any stretch of the imagination

Q: Under the British?

BROWN: Yes, under the British. Hong Kong gets a lot better marks for being a free market economy than it deserves. It gets those marks because in terms of the trade in goods it's a very open economy. In the services area, however, it was very carefully controlled by the British. Our problems in the trade sector with Hong Kong were largely in the services area. What could lawyers do? Doctors, people who were involved in various parts of the financial sector, what could they do and what couldn't they do? How do you regulate telephone services? How do you open up the port operations to other country's firms? Who would get the services contracts at the new airport that they're building? The Hong Kong economy was very important to the United States because there was a lot of American investment there, a lot of American companies there, but more importantly it was because of the impact that that economy was having on South China. There was a very symbiotic relationship between Hong Kong and the parts of China that were reforming economically the fastest and so the ability of Hong Kong to promote economic reform in China was seen as a big plus. It was something that you would want to keep going. Reform has gone so far in the 21st Century that Hong Kong's impact on China is less than it was at that time, but roughly 70% of all foreign direct investments into China in the years that I was in Hong Kong came in through Hong Kong. That meant technology, the foreign know-how, the ideas were coming in through Hong Kong, and keeping that going was important. For me seeing democracy develop in Hong Kong as far as it could possibly go was an important thing as well, not just for the sake of the people in Hong Kong, but because of the demonstration effect on the rest of China. Democracy hadn't gone nearly as far as one would like it to have gone. So it's not having as much of a demonstration effect as one would hope, but Hong Kong is still the only city in China where there are any members of a municipal council who are directly elected by the citizens. The democratic process there is flawed in many ways, but it's way ahead of the democratic process for the people of Beijing or Guangzhou or Shenyang.

Q: Were you aware or anybody else aware of mainland Chinese officials coming in and looking over the property, slamming the car doors, kicking the tires?

BROWN: Well, China was becoming a bigger part of the Hong Kong economy while we were there. There was a process of adjustment by the old British firms in which they realized that they didn't have to keep their relations with London and the governor greased as much as they had to keep their relations with Beijing and the incoming Chinese economic entities greased. You saw companies bringing in Chinese investors. You saw Cathay Pacific, the British invested airline in Hong Kong, spinning off a joint venture airline with some Chinese counterparts called DragonAir that would handle a large amount of the flights between, not all of them, but a large percentage of the flights between Hong Kong and the mainland. Cathay Pacific was an investor in DragonAir along with the Chinese. So, you saw this kind of positioning going on. Not by American companies because the American companies didn't have the inside track with the British. It was mainly the old-line British firms trying to adjust to the new masters. Some British firms tried to avoid this. Jardines, one of the oldest firms, moved their headquarters offshore so that it wouldn't be subject to control in Hong Kong. Its total business was in Hong Kong, but the headquarters would be in the Cayman Islands, I recall. However, most of the British firms went the other way finding ways to get along with your new masters.

Q: Were American firms still coming into Hong Kong?

BROWN: Oh, yes, very much so. The American chamber there was one of the biggest in the world and it was growing in those years despite Tiananmen.

Q: Was this a matter that it was a comfortable place in a way for a corporation to work into China? I mean English speaking.

BROWN: Yes and lots of local Hong Kong businessmen were doing the same thing. So American firms could operate on their own or cooperate with local partners.

Q: How did we relate to our consulate general in Guangzhou?

BROWN: They were two separate organizations with distinct purposes, but overlapping interests because of Hong Kong's intense economic ties with south China.

Q: I would think that you would sort of bump into each other?

BROWN: There was some bumping in not just with Guangzhou, but also with all the China post because of Hong Kong's reporting responsibilities on China. Hong Kong provided unique perspectives on China that didn't always jibe with views from within China. And our defense attaches were given responsibilities to travel throughout China. I remember a good friend who was the naval attaché took a trip to Tibet and then out from Tibet to Nepal and down to India.

Q: You have to for fleet connections there. You'd been in and out of there before of course, but was there a beginning of reluctance to talk to Americans within Hong Kong by the Chinese and all?

BROWN: No, not at all. We had I would say quite a bit of contact both with the representatives of China in Hong Kong and with the Chinese business there. It wasn't intimate, but a fair amount of contact.

Q: Were you getting any reflections there from Vietnam?

BROWN: We had a big problem with Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. We were caught between Washington then under the first Bush administration, which did not want to force any Vietnamese back to Vietnam and the UNHCR and the Hong Kong government that wanted to carefully distinguish between economic migrants and political refugees and send back to Vietnam those who were economic migrants. For Hong Kong, returning migrants was to be a deterrent against a continuing flood of people into Hong Kong. The numbers were quite large. It was a huge political issue within Hong Kong. All the money that had to go into building camps and providing police and health services and education in the camps and all this cost the Hong Kong taxpayer a lot. So there was pressure on the government to get the Vietnamese out. The Chinese Government frequently reminded Hong Kong that this problem should not exist in 1997. Clean it up; get rid of these people. was Beijing's message. And Washington was saying in effect don't send anyone back to Vietnam. Washington wanted liberal criteria for determining political refugee status. Anybody with the slightest reason for political refugee status should be given every opportunity to prove his or her case in Hong Kong.

Q: Were we putting our money where our mouth was as far as taking the refugees?

BROWN: Yes, quite a few people were coming to the States. By the end of the time I was there, we'd interviewed extensively and taken everybody that we wanted to take. There were criminal elements among the remaining Vietnamese. People who either had a criminal record that you could identify back in Vietnam or who had committed crimes in the camps. So how to evaluate the remaining Vietnamese was a very controversial issue.

Q: Were there any other issues there, a lot of fleet visits and things like that?

BROWN: Yes. And the fleet visits were one aspect of our efforts to build a foundation for post-reversion relationships. We wanted to make sure that we had all of this working smoothly and in a way which had a chance of surviving because the use of Hong Kong as an R&R destination was very convenient for the navy. We didn't want to do anything that would jeopardize that. The basic law was very specific that defense matters were a central government responsibility. Ship visits by naval vessels were an issue to be decided in Beijing and not in Hong Kong. Most of the period since the handover we've been able to have our ships visit Hong Kong as we did before, but there have been a couple of times for instance after the Belgrade bombing and after the EP3 incident when the Chinese temporarily stopped giving approval. It's worked reasonably well. What we were trying to do was position ourselves. We had an office within the consulate that provided support for ship visits. They had some facilities around town and we were trying to get these relocated in commercial locations so that we could have a very small number of people in Hong Kong handling visits, but the support structure would be there.

We did some other things. We reorganized the USIS library operation that conceivably could be seen as propaganda by a communist China. Partly for those reasons and partly for budgetary reasons we relocated the USIS library to Chinese University and made it a cooperative undertaking between Chinese University and the consulate so it could be embedded in Hong Kong. We renegotiated our air agreement with Hong Kong so it would be an agreement not between Britain and the United States, but between Hong Kong and the United States. The same thing was done in the area of law enforcement. We were negotiating agreements with Hong Kong on legal assistance and extradition. We got it negotiated but didn't actually get approval by the Senate until much later. Our objective was to have a basis for continuing law enforcement cooperation.

Q: Well, in a way you were, you had something that generally never happens, plenty of time to prepare for the inevitable.

BROWN: Right, and I think we made good use of it.

Q: How about congress? Did people, a lot of congress people coming by and all?

BROWN: We had a lot of them; some seriously interested in Hong Kong and some came just to shop.

Q: I was going to say, I was wondering whether Mr. Lee was still turning out his suits. When I went to Vietnam you know, we all stopped and got your \_\_\_\_\_, but there was one major tailor. You walked in and you walked out two minutes with your measurements.

BROWN: Many from Congress came because of the Vietnam refugee issue. There were some like Senator McConnell and Representative Porter who came because they were really concerned about Hong Kong and what's going to happen to the six million people there.

Q: When you left there, you left there in '92.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: How did you feel about the situation? I mean did you think it was going to come out moderately well or not?

BROWN: I was quite optimistic. Optimistic because we saw a lot of resilience in the Hong Kong community. The British were beginning to allow Hong Kong Chinese to have significant positions in the administration, five or six years in advance so that they would be positioned there to keep the civil administration going. We didn't know how the political arrangements were going to work out, but the arrangements were very explicit on one thing and that was that there weren't going to be people from Beijing running things. It was going to be people in Hong Kong, ultimately chosen by Beijing, but people in Hong Kong. And I thought they would stand up or be pushed by the Hong Kong people to stand up for Hong Kong.

Why would one be optimistic? One reason was the resilience of the Hong Kong community. The second was that the international community would be watching. The international community has I think a number of guises, but one of the most important is what you would call international markets. Hong Kong was important to the Chinese economy because of the investment flow, and the Chinese would have its self interest in making sure that Hong Kong remained a vibrant economy and an entry way for the benefits of international trade which were still heavily coming through there. The third reason that gave one some confidence was the Taiwan factor. Everyone knew that the mainland wanted to move on from dealing with Hong Kong to dealing ultimately with Taiwan and talking it back into the fold. If Taiwan concluded that Beijing had not implemented its deal with Hong Kong, then no one in Taiwan would risk making a deal with Beijing. Therefore, the PRC had an interest from that angle as well of living up to the terms worked out with the British in order to have credibility in trying to deal with Taiwan. So, there were reasons for Beijing to adhere to its agreement to give Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy. It wasn't a lost cause, and the U.S. should do its part in encouraging the deal to work.

Q: What was the feeling? I must say I was sort of surprised, because I had never followed Hong Kong at all, to see that the British were opening Hong Kong up to more Hong Kongese into the government and all that. I would have thought that that would have been done a long time ago. Was there a feeling that the Brits really should have done this a long time ago?

BROWN: Definitely. They should have done it years earlier. They should have had a political process going on in Hong Kong in the '70s and '80s, but they made some decisions early after the Second World War and repeated them I think in the '60s at the time of the cultural revolution of China, that by gosh Britain was going to keep control of things. Yes, there was a legislative council for the city as a whole, but until 1984, the year of the Sino-British joint Declaration, every single member of the legislative council was appointed by the governor. It was a selection process, not an election process. The British began rapidly after '84 moving to put in place representative institutions. What was the Chinese view of this? The Chinese view was that Hong Kong was to be turned over the way I had been in 1984. So introducing representative government after 1984 wasn't something Beijing had agreed to.

Q: They had a point.

BROWN: They had a point. Beyond the Legislative Council, there were a large number of Hong Kong people working in the administration, but very few of them made it up to the senior levels. There were large numbers of Brits not just as the head of departments, but as the head of sections of departments and deputy section heads who were still British civil servants running Hong Kong up until the late '80s.

Q: It seems so almost atypical of what was happening everywhere else, I mean you know, one always hears about the Belgian Congo was the great thing. They had about three educated people and here you're talking about a highly sophisticated city. I mean were you talking to the, was there sort of a colonial attitude among the British?

BROWN: Yes. There was an end the empire mentality among some of them. The official government view, the British government view was that we've got a pretty good deal and it's going to work and we're going to be proud of what we're doing, we're not ratting out and abandoning these people. But there were a lot of civil servants who sort of said, oh, you guys will never be able to run it. Moral will collapse and corruption will return. That was the end of empire mentality among some of the British civil servants. They were the Brits who left at reversion. Yet today, there are still many Brits working in second rung positions in Hong Kong government, even now six or seven years after Hong Kong's return.

Q: Now, we come to '92, whither? I thought we'd quit here, but I mean, where did you go?

BROWN: I came back to the Department.

Q: To do what?

BROWN: I had three successive jobs and then retired. The first one as Director of the Office of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore Affairs.

Q: How long did you do that?

BROWN: For one year. Then I did two years as the Director of what we created, the Office of Regional and Security Policy. We can talk about that. Then one year as Director of Korean Affairs.

Q: Good.

BROWN: that was '92 to '96 and then I was retired.

Q: Okay, well, we'll pick it up then.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Great.

Today is the ides of April and income tax day, April 15, 2003. David, we're off to, you first, what year was this that you took this?

BROWN: I came back in the summer of '92 to the Office of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore. This was a job for which I had had no training. I had not served in any of those countries previously and essentially got this job because a friend of mine was Principal DAS.

Q: Who was that?

BROWN: Desaix Anderson who you've probably interviewed. If you haven't you definitely should.

Q: He's not been on my list.

BROWN: He has retired and is living in New York where he works as an artist, but he retains an interest in Vietnam. His last job was as head of our office in Hanoi.

Q: Well, then, what were the issues in '92? You were there a year was that right?

BROWN: Right.

Q: What were the issues that you found yourself dealing with in this unknown part of the world?

BROWN: The first thing was finding out what ASEAN was all about. Actually I became quite taken with this organization for what it was accomplishing in Southeast Asia. I became fascinated with their efforts to get a dialogue on security issues going in the Asian region. The dialogue would have people who had been at war with each other in the past talking together about what the region should look like in the future. The Bush administration had been against such dialogues in the past because they saw these activities as potentially undermining our alliance relationships, which were the basis of American security in the Pacific. When I got back to Washington, Bill Clark was the Assistant Secretary at the end of the Bush administration. Bill was open minded about these things so we got to talking and concluded that the time had come for the U.S. to shift gears and participate in discussion of security issues in a multilateral context in Asia. Well, this didn't go anywhere because Bill was serving at the end of an administration when new initiatives had to await the outcome of the election. .

Q: What are you talking about for the United States? What had been our stand before in this sort of thing?

BROWN: Our stand had been that we didn't want to see multilateral dialogues on securities developing because we were afraid they would undermine U.S. security policy. In the late '80s Gorbachev was still in control of the Soviet Union and was trying to promote these kinds of dialogues and was very explicitly in saying that they were intended to replace alliances, meaning ours. So the administration had been warning others not to be taken in by such suggestions. Well, that era had ended before I got back to Washington because in December of '91 the Soviet Union had disappeared. So people were willing to take a new look at this in part because two of the strongest supporters of such dialogues were our allies Japan and Australia. So, it seemed to us that we could take a new at this and like I said that didn't go anywhere under Bill Clark.

When Clinton got elected he nominated Winston Lord to be his assistant Secretary for Asia. In his confirmation hearings, Winston stated that he was open to pursuing security dialogues. The climate was ripe for this throughout the rest of Asia. So when the new administration signaled its willingness, people in ASEAN picked that up. In the spring of 1993, even before Winston was really sworn in, the Singaporeans had already proposed a meeting of like-minded countries in Singapore for April or May to see if agreement could be reached on launching a regional security dialogue. So, Winston and I and Bill Pendley from the Defense Department, ISA Office for Asia, and a couple of others went to participate in this meeting. Out of the meeting came a consensus proposal to set up something called the ASEAN Regional Forum, which would be an inconclusive group of countries talking about security in Asia. Inclusive meant that this would be not just the U.S. and its allies, but that the Russians, the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Lao would be invited to participate so that it really would be an inclusive group. Then everyone went home to consult with their governments to see whether policy makers would endorse an idea that had been worked out at the senior officials level. Low and behold, no one in Washington objected.

Q: So, as long as the marshal plan in a way, how it sort of got going. Sort of a suggestion is thrown out and everybody says, hey, let's talk about that.

BROWN: Yes. The talk had been going on for some time, and the Singaporeans who, who always think strategically, were in the Chair of ASEAN and in a position to take the initiative.

Q: Is Lee Kwan Yew still the prime minister?

BROWN: He had retired as prime minister, but designed for himself the "senior minister" and appointed a man of the next generation. Goh Chok Tong, to be the prime minister. But everybody knew who was calling the shots. So, Singapore launched this initiative, it was pretty clear that he would have the blessing of Lee to do this, and it very much fits into Lee's way of thinking strategically about the region.

Q: Well, how did you find when this working a strategic alliance you said was down within the East Asian Bureau? Was this one of these things that felt that its time has come or were there problems?

BROWN: We had no problems. But I'll be frank about it, that was because almost nobody cared at all? Winston and Bill Pendley at Defense thought this was a good idea. I happened to entirely agree. As I said we could have been moving in this direction before they arrived. So we wrote the briefing papers to the Secretary, cleared them around, DOD, NSC and CIA, before sending it up the line. There was very little debate.

Q: You were pushing against an unlocked door?

BROWN: Right. It came back saying, okay, go ahead and do this.

Q: Well, what did this mean for us? How did you see this? What did this mean we were doing now?

BROWN: First, we weren't undoing anything that the U.S. had in place. We were preserving our alliance relationships. We were cooperating as I said with other allied governments in the region who thought this was the right thing to do. So, we saw this as adding something else on top of what we already had, our alliances, adding something that was compatible with those alliance relationships. We thought over time dialogue might help reshape the way countries in Asia had dealt with each other. We were conscious that there were long term historical animosities at work, the Chinese and Vietnamese, the Chinese and Japanese, and that there were short-term issues that divided countries. The Vietnamese had at that point in time just gotten out of Cambodia. While this issue was being debated, the North Korean nuclear issue was blowing up in the northern part of Asia. So, there were lots of contemporary issues. We believed that the U.S. had nothing to lose and potentially something to gain over the long term by getting people together and seeing if they couldn't build "habits of cooperation" as we put it then. To talk about security issues, to understand each other's concerns and fears and build habits of cooperation where they had not existed before.

When you had looked at the military organizations of most of the countries in Asia, you saw they were very closed inward looking organizations. Part of what we were aiming for was to find ways of breaking those barriers down and building linkages and establishing relationships. This was a bit of a trick because, even though the U.S. brought along DOD colleagues, almost no other country that showed up at the initial planning meeting brought anyone from their militaries along. Once the thing had been established, one of the early U.S. goals was to get the military officers, particularly younger military officers, engaged in the work of this organization, working on things that were common problems, that were not controversial, but would begin to establish some personal relationships. Believe it or not even within ASEAN, which had created a huge pattern of cooperation amongst almost every part of their governments, there was little direct contact between military officials.

Q: In other words, the Southeast Asians weren't the military was sort of unto itself. When the foreign ministers went off they, I mean they didn't think of military because as far as they were concerned, military was sort of a self imposed until dealing within a country rather than?

BROWN: Right and in some of these countries there wasn't a lot of communication between the military and other segments of civil society.

Q: I would think one of the things that you'd think up there would be to work on piracy, the naval.

BROWN: Yes, that was in fact an area that everyone was talking about as something that the ARF might get involved in once it got started. It's gone about it in a very delicate way because the question of piracy is very politically sensitive.

Q: Why is that?

BROWN: It is politically sensitive along the China coast because it implies that China is not able to control its own maritime borders and politically sensitive in Southeast Asia particularly in Indonesia for the same reason. So in the Malacca Straits, are you going to allow well-organized Singaporean police to chase pirates into Indonesian and Malaysian waters? So, piracy was too sensitive an issue for a fledgling organization to deal with at the start. In fact, arrangements were worked out on a trilateral basis between the Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore on how to improve policing in the Malacca Straits.

Q: I think all of these countries though of us as the camel that was sticking its head under the tent, into the tent or something. I mean we travel with our military. I mean they're part of our calculation and have them say let's all get together and they'll take one look at the seventh fleet or something like this, you can see an awful lot. I would think it would be very reluctant.

BROWN: Well, it took a while. Let's put it that way. It took six or seven years before the pattern of everybody bringing defense officials, whether they were civilians or in uniform, along got established. But here I'm looking into the future and not talking about '93.

Q: This was sort of the beginning.

BROWN: In 1992 and 1993 when I was in the IMBS Office, I dealt with this issue because that office handled our policy toward ASEAN as an organization. That's how I got involved with ASEAN, and it was also the reason I got out of that office. With a new regional security organization being formed, we decided that the East Asia Bureau had to reorganize and get ready to deal more meaningful with these kind of regional security issues. EAP had an office of regional affairs, but it was an office that dealt with anything that no other office wanted to deal with. It handled congressional relations for the bureau, it handled the preparations for our participation in the UN General Assembly and it handled general budgeting issues.

Q: It loses focus then on the security issue?

BROWN: So, what we did was we take the ASEAN portfolio out of the IMBS desk and moved it into the regional affairs office and then renamed that office as the Office of Regional and Security Policy. Within RSP, we set up a two person operation that dealt just with the ARF. Since I knew little about the four IMBS countries, I decided to switch jobs and go to this new RSP office to do something that I felt I was developing some expertise in. It just so happened that the officer who was slated to go into that job, a friend of mine, had spent a good part of his career in Indonesia and Malaysia. So, I called him up and we talked about it and he agreed he'd really rather be IMBS director.

Q: Who was this?

BROWN: Scott Butcher and I thought the regional thing was something that I could contribute on and was interested in so we agreed to propose the switch and talked to Winston Lord who approved it.

Q: Well, at this time in '92 ASEAN was a pretty good regional economic entity was it?

BROWN: Yes, it was six countries and they were all doing extremely well economically. They had in this same period '91, '92, '93, been working very successfully on the Cambodian peace agreement. The peace agreement wasn't something that ASEAN did on its own. It was a combination of ASEAN and the members of the P5 at the UN, the U.S., France, China, Russia, all playing important roles. They put this altogether and got the UN to come in on a major new peace keeping operation in Cambodia. So, because of its economic success and its diplomatic contribution, ASEAN was quite highly regarded in that period.

Q: Well, your background was economic.

BROWN: And political.

Q: And political, but I mean were you picking up any concern about that whole Asian area and the finances you know because we're talking about before the Asian financial crisis?

BROWN: And the answer is no. We were not.

Q: Had we sort of accepted the fact that banks were making not very good loans and all that and that was just a way of life or something?

BROWN: The area was booming in the early 90s and I guess we and almost everyone were asleep at the switch. This all hit in the summer of '97 and I had retired in '96 a year before.

Q: It didn't happen on your watch?

BROWN: It didn't happen on my watch, but I was Director of Korean Affairs for the year before this. The fact that Korea was running a trade deficit was known, but we certainly didn't see the collapse coming. I left the Korea desk before the early signs of trouble were recognized. I really left before the clear signs that something might be going wrong in Korea emerged, but in this whole period I would say that my colleagues and I, no one was standing up and saying this is a huge bubble about to burst, look at the way this is being financed. Look at the corporate governance; no one was saying those things in the '92 to '96 period when I was back in the States.

Q: You wonder, I mean, things of this nature, the collapse of the Soviet Union. I mean God knows no country has had such a concentration of intelligence efforts overt and covert put on it and yet when it went, just went, without any premonition of this and this Asian financial bubble was a major, we're still living with some of the consequence of it. Yet, somehow or another we don't see these things. I guess we don't even see things within our own country either.

BROWN: Again, this is getting beyond my retirement, but after it all blew, there were a couple of people in what you might call the financial world who were able to go back and say we wrote pieces in '96 predicting that a problem was coming in Thailand or in Korea, but their numbers were very few.

Q: Well, let's go back to the. Did you get involved at all in the countries per se Indonesia and all?

BROWN: Well, the answer was yes, while I was at IMBS. I could tack off some of those bigger things that happened on my watch in Indonesia. One had to do with East Timor. There had just been a massacre in the year before in Dili. The Indonesian police shooting demonstrators, there was a lot of attention focused on East Timor. Xanana Gusmao, who was the leader of the independence movement there, was in fact arrested in the fall of '92 not long after I took up my responsibilities. Then we had the kind of thing that comes in your relations with Singapore every once in a while. The Michael Fay caning case. You may remember this? Fay was an American who had spray painted a car in Singapore and was tried in the Singapore courts and given a sentence of six lashes with a bamboo cane. This was a form of punishment that was used in Singapore, but created a huge uproar in the United States. It became a political issue involving the White House, which all of a sudden became very critical of human rights conditions in Singapore as a result of this case. A country that had gone out of its way to facilitate the American military presence in Asia after we were forced out of the Philippines, all of a sudden became a politically persona non grata in the United States. The administration didn't want to have senior Singaporean officials coming because this issue was hanging over everyone's head and people right up to the president were saying very critical things about human rights conditions in Singapore. This was something we just had to deal with. Eventually he was caned and returned to the United States. He lived through the thing and it sort of all went away. There was about a six month period between his sentencing and the carrying out of his sentence in which there was a hell of a lot of activity to try and persuade the Singaporeans not to actually carry out the sentence. They were simply determined that this was a standard part of Singapore legal system and had actually come to them from the British and they were going to do it.

Q: But on this at a certain point did you just say, okay, this is show business. I mean this is posturing and you just sort of okay, go along or did you really feel?

BROWN: We thought at the beginning there was some hope that a little bit of quiet diplomacy would maybe lead the Singaporeans to find some way of dealing with this problem such as expelling him from the country without actually caning. However, once the case had gotten the publicity of the White House criticizing Singapore's human rights record, their backs got up and there was no way they weren't going to carry out their own legal system.

Q: It also was a new administration coming in which all can run amuck for a while until they settle down and are able to be responsible.

BROWN: Right. So, we had that and the other thing that was interesting was concerned Malaysia where we had had very bad relations under Bush and Baker at the end of the Bush presidency. Malaysia sent out some fairly clear signals that Prime Minister Mahathir wanted to have better relations with the U.S. We worked quite hard at bringing that about. Mahathir was a very complex individual whose rhetoric was often critical of the United States, but who on a practical level, both facilitated American investment in his country and also quietly kept a good working relationship with the U.S. military. We saw the basis for being able to cooperate with him on certain things while sort of looking the other way his rhetoric, which he calmed down in this period. I think we made substantial progress and the focus of it was in trying to persuade the Malaysians to buy advanced military aircraft from the U.S. They were in the market for a modern jet to strengthen their air force and were looking at French, Russian and American planes. So, we made a huge push on it and in the end Mahathir decided to split the business between the Russians and the Americans and bought some MIGs and some F18s.

Q: You say Mahathir was a complex person. What was, where was his anti-American rhetoric coming from?

BROWN: I think it was in part a reflection of his personality. He was at times an abrasive, straight talking individual. He was also playing to his domestic audiences in Malaysia that are predominantly Muslim and often critical of the U.S. I can't remember just what the rhetoric was, but before I came on the job Mahathir had gone to the UN and given a vitriolic speech attacking the American role in the world. That was what really poisoned his relations with the Bush administration.

Q: How did you find, I mean, you came in between, you came in under the Bush administration? How did you find the transition from your optic went from your responsibility?

BROWN: I think it went quite well. Again I'm just speaking of the East Asian Bureau. Bill Clark a real professional passed things over to Winston Lord who had worked in government for democrats and republicans at different times. I think Lord had endeared himself to Clinton because he had taken a hard line on China's human rights policy, advocating the linkage of trade and the human rights. But he had worked in a republican administration before. And so, it was one professional turning things over to another professional. It was a sharp contrast with Dick Holbrook's arrival in the Carter years. Dick didn't want to listen to a single thing, his predecessor Amb. Hummel had to say. Winston was the exact opposite. He was willing to talk to everybody. He consulted endlessly with people. So, there was a much easier transition. There wasn't a wholesale scrapping of people. There were some changes. Winston brought in Peter Thompson who had been his DCM in Beijing to be the principal DAS and made him responsible for China. Peter was not a particular popular choice amongst his professional colleagues, but he was a professional.

Q: Did in \_\_\_\_\_ and all, how about the China card, how were things changing there or did you see that?

BROWN: The new administration, including Lord, came into office with the Clinton campaign rhetoric criticizing the Chinese leaders as "the butchers of Beijing."

Q: We're talking about the aftermath of Tiananmen Square?

BROWN: That's right. Clinton had criticized the Bush administration for working so hard to keep the U.S. China relationship going after Tiananmen. Because of that, Clinton had advocated, partly I think at Winston Lord's urging, a linkage of trade access to the U.S. markets on favorable terms to progress on human rights. That became the administration policy. Winston was at one time administering the trade-human rights linkage in bilateral relations with China and at the same time, on the multilateral level, he was working to include the Chinese in the ARF.

Q: How about the Indonesian government at the time, how did we see that when you had that responsibility?

BROWN: Autocratic, repressive.

Q: This is Suharto still?

BROWN: Yes, Suharto was President. We had the problems I mentioned earlier in terms of their harsh treatment of East Timor. We had recurrent problems on labor issues because Jakarta was arresting labor leaders and this created problems for American policy, which wanted to promote free trade unions overseas. Suharto was very repressive with respect to the press in Indonesia. He did not permit any meaningful political opposition. There were three parties in Indonesia and they were all ones that had been organized with the blessing of the government. I felt that Indonesia had a very fragile political system and that American business needed to be very careful. To operate successfully in Suharto's Indonesia, you had to work with people who were well connected, which meant finding ways of getting money to them and cutting deals from which these people would profit as joint venture partners. It was a corrupt system. At the same time, if you got too deeply in bed with these people and Suharto fell, you were going to be hurt. It was a very tricky environment for foreign investors.

Q: Was there the feeling, you were sort of the new boy on the block on this, to talk to the Indonesian hands, were they seeing this as saying this is sort of the end game playing out as sort of with Marcos in the Philippines?

BROWN: Not at that time. In 1992, '93 Suharto was still very much in control. You have to remember that in 1997 four or five months before he was forced out of office he had manufactured his reelection for a sixth term. His whole system remained supportive and then six months later he was gone.

Q: This is tape six, side one with David Brown. How were we viewing the problem of potential dissolution of the Indonesian nation? I mean you have Aceh up in Sumatra. The whole place is just a despairing nation. Were we just sort of hoping to keep it together?

BROWN: In 1992-3, we did not see signs of imminent dissolution. We were aware of these problems and we were constantly being told by the Indonesians that they had to have a tough policy because if they didn't have a tough policy it would be hard to hold Indonesia together. We knew it was a potential issue, but there was no evidence that the Indonesian government was losing its control in Papua or Aceh or for that matter in East Timor in '92 and '93.

Q: Was East Timor a focus of our attention at that time?

BROWN: It was a chronic irritant in U.S. Indonesian relations because of the heavy-handed military occupation of East Timor.

Q: Was this a case where it was hard for us to talk to the military in Indonesia?

BROWN: No. We had good access and dealings with the Indonesian military, though our congress was doing its best to make this difficult, particularly after the Dili massacre in November of 1991. The congress had started putting restrictions on the use of IMET, the International Military Education and Training, funds for the Indonesian military. We weren't selling the Indonesian military at this point in time any substantial heavy equipment. First of all they didn't have very much money to buy it and there was reluctance on the part of the U.S. to sell them these systems. They were getting their equipment from other people. We had some extraordinarily capable people in the defense attaché's office, who had been on multiple tours in Indonesia and had come up through the ranks with their colleagues in the Indonesian armed forces.

Q: Were we trying to get to the military to say, be a little more benevolent?

BROWN: Absolutely. We were trying to do these things and having limited success I would say.

Q: Well, then when you moved over, this would be what '93?

BROWN: The summer of '93 I made the switch to this new office of Regional and Security Policy.

Q: You were there from '93 to?

BROWN: For two years.

Q: '95.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: In the first place, let's start on the bureaucratic thing, when you get something renamed and all this it's usually a good bit of time spent trying to develop your power to establish your footprint in the policy thing, I mean, did you go through that?

BROWN: Yes, there were a lot of things to be worked out beyond simply changing the name. The key was to get two new positions for the regional security function. That took a lot of effort even when no one was opposing it. I had the very strong support from Winston Lord the assistant secretary who believed that the work he was doing on these multilateral arrangements in Asia, the ARF which I was involved in and the addition to APEC of a leaders level meeting were among his most important achievements. So, Winston was very strongly supportive. It was just a matter of working these things all through the hoops.

Then the next two years was spent on the work of helping to establish the ARF. Preparing for the first of its meetings in '94, which formally established the organization. Then in between '94 and '95 a year was set aside by the ARF to work out a consensus statement of what the organization was going to do in its initial phase. That statement was endorsed by the foreign ministers in a meeting in Brunei in the summer of 1995. That was basically the end of my tenure in RSP.

Q: How did you find that Winston Lord worked with the Secretary of State Warren Christopher?

BROWN: Very well.

Q: Was it a matter of Warren Christopher saying you get East Asia, take it or was the hand of Christopher?

BROWN: His hand was light, but there were certain issues that the Secretary had to be involved in. Winston's work with him on China was probably the best example of that. The Secretary also had to be involved in endorsing what we were doing with the ARF. Christopher went to the Foreign Ministers meeting in Singapore in 1993. This was a meeting of the foreign ministers of ASEAN and their so-called dialogue partners, the U.S., Japan, Canada, Korea, Australia, New Zealand. It was that group that decided to set up the ARF and to announce that the next meeting in '94 would include the foreign ministers of the other countries as well, Russia, China, Vietnam and so forth.

Christopher was also scheduled to attend the actual first meeting of the ARF that took place in Bangkok the following summer. However, at the very last minute Christopher decided not to go because of a hastily arranged meeting at the White House between Arafat and Rabin. Christopher decided that it was more important to be at this Middle East peace summit than to go to Bangkok's inaugural meeting of the ARF. To put it in a less attractive light, Christopher's public image wasn't particularly good. He had the image of a cold fish. It didn't appear that he was terribly centrally involved in important issues, and his public affairs handlers said, he's got to be seen as involved in something that's important and that's the Middle East peace process. Even if the president was doing all the real work, he's got to be there in the photographs. So he's not going to Bangkok.

Then there was the issue of who would take Christopher's place in Bangkok. The Secretary's initial inclination was to send Peter Tarnoff who was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs in theory the third ranking person in the State Department. But Tarnoff had not been involved with Asia policy and was not seen as a politically important figure by Asians. Winston had to race around and get the Secretary to change his mind and send Strobe Talbot, the Deputy Secretary. Strobe went. He had more rank and was just the right kind of person for the job, an intellectual who thought strategically and understood the importance of the event. He accepted the job with a certain amount of relish.

Q: Were you seen as you were getting ready for this the development of ties in each country and then to each country to the organization of the political military side, particularly the military side?

BROWN: That wasn't occurring in this first meeting, but we felt it was important. We sent instructions to all our embassies to go in and talk about the importance of bringing their defense officials along. The argument was that you couldn't have a meaningful security dialogue until the people responsible security were involved. We had some success in getting people to come along. Another thing we pushed in the '94 to '95 period when the organization was thinking about how to develop itself was the idea of organizing meetings on issues of practical interest to the participating countries. Choosing activities would naturally involve the military. The first of these practical meetings was now the participation of militaries from the various countries in UN peacekeeping operations. We got a dozen countries to show up at this first meeting and they sent either defense or uniformed military people to the meeting to talk very practically about what kind of units do you send, how do you have to prepare them before they go. What kind of military training, what kind of political sensitivity training do you have to give units that are going to participate in UN peacekeeping operations? What works, what doesn't work? It was a very non-confrontational activity, but it got the militaries from a number of countries talking to each other.

Q: Sort of like a workshop?

BROWN: Yes, it was and that's what we called it - a workshop.

Q: How about Vietnam, was that, they were in this, weren't they?

BROWN: They were involved. The first ARF ministers meeting in Bangkok took place in a hotel room and used the format that Bill Clinton had worked out for the APEC leaders meeting the year before. That was that the meetings would be informal and that each country would only send two people the foreign minister and one senior official to sit behind him. The ministers sat in a big hotel room in Bangkok in comfortable easy chairs for two hours talking with each other. The seating was arranged alphabetically in the English language. So the Vietnam Foreign Minister sat next to Strobe Talbot as the U.S. representative.

Q: Was there as you were looking at this thing, were we seeing a problem with Vietnam or were we sort of really trying to get Vietnam into the bosom of the family?

BROWN: Well, you have to realize that we had not moved towards normalization of U.S. Vietnamese relations at that point. Normalization was another issue that Winston worked on very hard and we made some progress. When this meeting was taking place in the summer of '94 we had not normalized relations. We didn't have diplomatic ties with Vietnam at that point. This was another way to build some bridges and show good will and so forth.

Q: In looking at this during your '93 to '95 period and even earlier when you had been in your other job, how would you, I won't say rank the countries, but were there countries within this that were pains in the asses and other ones that were from our perspective sort of on the right road or prima donnas or anything?

BROWN: Well, I would say that the basic dynamic of this group was between countries that wanted to see the organization develop and become meaningful and others which were very concerned that the organization not do anything whatsoever that infringed on their national sovereignty. Foremost among the defenders of sovereignty were Indonesia and Malaysia. The Chinese were the other ones acting as a break. The ARF operated by consensus, which pretty much meant that even one country could block agreement. That was the main question. The other subtext was between the ASEAN countries and the non-ASEAN members. The ARF was the ASEAN not Asian regional forum. The ASEAN countries were absolutely determined that they were going to remain the "driving force" behind this organization. They were not going to let the big boys, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Americans, dictate to them what this organization should do. So this was the other underlying dynamic. Our approach was to seek working arrangements which allowed both the ASEAN and non-ASEAN members would have an equal ability to contribute to the work of this organization.

Q: Was there a problem that you saw or you know, the United States, the biggest boy on the block. We tend to be pro-active and all this and then something like this I can see where diplomatically it would behoove us to be sort of quiet and say, oh, this is great and not come in with all sorts of proposals. I mean, but I can see it.

BROWN: This is what we did. We went out of our way not to give the impression that we were trying to run or dictate to this organization. We wanted very much to have an impact on how it got started, how it defined its mission, what it would do, but we didn't want to be seen as pushy and assertive. So our approach was essentially to give everyone else credit for doing what we wanted done. Whether that meant endorsing things that the Japanese wanted to do or supporting the Australians who along with the Canadians were the two most activist participants. We consulted closely, but let the activists make the proposals. Then we would help them out and try to build consensus, while recognizing that they were running much too fast for some of the others. I think in some ways our biggest contribution at the beginning was this effort to find out ways of quietly attracting the militaries into this organization.

Q: Speaking of the military, a power that was not mentioned was becoming stronger particularly the Indian navy, but India.

BROWN: India was not considered in the beginning. However, after I left and I can't remember if this was '96 or '97, the issue of India joining was addressed. While I wasn't directly involved then, basically the U.S. was reluctant to see this happen because we were afraid that if you brought India in you would have to bring Pakistan. If you brought Pakistan and India in, that would mean importing the Indo-Pak controversy into the organization, which already had too many internal problems to deal with. So, the U.S. resisted that, but once again it was the Singaporeans who were pushing this and in the end the overall consensus in the group was to one invite the Indians in and to reach an internal consensus that there would never be an invitation to Pakistan. The reason many countries wanted India in was to act as another counter weight to rising China. One of the things on which there was a general consensus in the region was to try and constrain China by embedding it in regional organizations. This was never said but it was a subtext in all of this. Southeast Asians saw India as a player in a larger game of trying to build a network that would constrain China.

Q: Well, India makes a great deal of sense because of their military power in the Indian Ocean and sort of like Japan on the other side, that whole crescent there.

BROWN: One other thing before we move on that was interesting was the Mischief Reef incident.

Q: The what?

BROWN: Mischief Reef is the English name for a reef in the South China Sea, which is within the 200-mile economic zone of the Philippines. It was an uninhabited reef, claimed by the Philippines, by China and I think by Vietnam.

Q: This wasn't the Spratlys was it?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: I mean, yes I can remember.

BROWN: In the spring of 1995, without any advance notice, the Chinese built what they called a fishermen's assistance facility on Mischief Reef. From pictures, it was a cement buildings built on pilings. The construction was done by the Chinese military as part of China's effort to assert its rights in the South China Sea. This really concerned the Philippines and provoked a general reaction in Southeast Asia. This action led the U.S. Government to develop a new statement of its policy on the South China Sea.

It also became a major issue in the summer of 1995 in the preparations for the ARF ministerial meeting in Brunei, a country with 250,000 people that was in the chair of ASEAN. China with 1.2 billion people had just occupied a reef, maybe 400 miles from Brunei. It was Brunei's responsibility to coordinate the ARF's response to the Chinese action. On one side of the issue you had countries that were concerned saying we've got to put some pressure on the Chinese. On the other side, China was opposed to putting the issue on the ARF agenda and at one point threatened not to attend the meeting if Mischief Reef would be an issue for discussion. The U.S. and Australia took the position that for the ARF to have credibility as a security forum it would have to address the issue. This was a very tricky issue and Brunei eventually having consulted widely went to the Chinese and said, ministers are going to talk about this whether we put it on the agenda or not. As the chairman, Brunei's foreign minister will have to summarize the discussion that actually takes place in the written statement issued at the end of the meeting. We want you to understand this. In the end, the Chinese came to the meeting. There was a discussion, and the Chinese presented a new statement of their policy on the South China Sea in which for the first time Beijing committed to resolving issues in accordance with the Law of the Sea Treaty. Our interpretation was that the Chinese decided they couldn't afford not to be at the ARF and that, if they were going to come to this meeting, it would be advantageous to issue a conciliatory statement. I think this was one of the things that convinced people that having the ASEAN Regional Forum was a useful forum. The ARF couldn't challenge the Chinese, but it could put a certain amount of pressure on the Chinese and force the Chinese to take opinions in the region into account in ways that the Chinese wouldn't have had to do if the organization didn't exist. Winston and Christopher were all really very pleased with the way this worked out. One year after its creation, the ARF was serving as a significant forum for discussion.

Q: Because that area, I remember it was an area of contention back when I was in South Vietnam in the '70s. But Vietnam and the sort of peace in China always claimed to, the thought being that there might be oil around there.

BROWN: Yes, that's correct. On the Vietnamese side of the South China Sea there are some exploration blocks in the Vietnamese exclusive economic zone where oil has been found and it's being produced.

Q: On this issue, the reef issue, were we being very careful to take a back seat or were we?

BROWN: To my disappointment, the answer to that is yes. That spring I took the lead in drafting a new statement of U.S. policy on the South China Sea. I hoped it would include a clear statement of U.S. opposition to military moves that would threaten peace in the region. Winston Lord's view was that the Chinese would see this as a challenge and that the U.S. already had enough problems in our bilateral relations with China. The U.S. should not be out in front on the Mischief Reef question. Yes, we have interests, but we shouldn't be out there leading the charge to challenge the Chinese in this area. We should leave that to the claimants. So, when we worked out this new statement of U.S. policy, it represented some advance from earlier very general statements, but it did not assert in any way that the U.S. was going to play a role of trying to diffuse tensions.

Q: You said you were disappointed. Did you feel that we should have played a more aggressive role?

BROWN: Yes, I thought that we were dealing with a dynamic in the South China Sea in which all of the claimants, the Vietnamese, the Filipinos, the Chinese, the Malaysians were taking actions that provoked the others to respond. The situation could easily get out of hand and require some response by the U.S. This had happened in the Paracels in the 1970, when the Chinese attacked and drove the Vietnamese out of the islands, with considerable casualties. Rather than waiting, it would be better to encourage the claimants to work out some rules of the game. The actual idea our office was advocating was that there ought to be an agreement by all of the parties not to occupy any new territory nor substantially reinforce existing positions. We thought that the U.S. ought to be much more active particularly working with the Indonesians which as the biggest country in Southeast Asia had been active on these issues. Winston said, no. This would essentially mean organizing people to resist the Chinese and we don't need to do that. Let them do it on their own.

Q: Of course, out of this whole issue raises the question that has been around for a hell of a long time and that is the expansion of China. I mean everybody has been watching China. Are they really planning to exert their influence? I mean it's an empire that's sort of grown and contracted and grown and contracted. This was one place that, it may be a small reef, but it still was representative of aggression.

BROWN: If you look around the periphery of China, there are a couple of places where there are minor territorial disputes. However, there is no evidence that the Chinese are seeking territorial aggrandizement. The South China Sea is a sensitive area because there are unresolved competing claims to essentially uninhabitable areas unless one builds artificial structures. This is a very unique area and one shouldn't draw conclusions about general Chinese behavior from what they will do in the South China Sea. After Mischief Reef, the Chinese didn't expand their footprint in the area.

Q: Which results in having a group of people, a group of nations getting together and looking at this in the cold light of day and making certain actions sort of unacceptable. Which if it was just between one country and another, particularly if one country is China, it's a little harder to face it down.

BROWN: It didn't happen on my watch, but subsequently the idea of no new outposts has in fact been worked into the code of conduct in the South China Sea, which was adopted in 2002, I think.

Q: Any efforts to get with this regional organization get rescue of distressed vessels or don't provoke each other by military ships getting too close together? Things that sort of day to day regulations of how one conducts oneself in the area.

BROWN: Not during my time. Things had to develop very slowly, but subsequent to my leaving that office there have been cooperative meetings on disaster relief and particularly in the role of militaries in disaster relief operations and on search and rescue. What are the rules of the road with respect to distressed vessels? What is the law that relates to international search and rescue in the waters of the Pacific? There have been cooperative activities, practicing search and rescue procedures, all done under the auspices of the ARF. Again the U.S. has been a proponent of this because this is a way to bring the militaries of the various countries together to talk to discuss common problems and build habits of cooperation.

Q: When one looks at our, within the Foreign Service, at the European bureau and all, we've got a very strong cadre of people who deal with international relations. NATO, OSCE, you know what I mean, all of these organizations and so we have officers who can go back and forth between Geneva, Paris, Belgium, Brussels and London and all over. How about within Asia? At the time we're talking about, was there something like this or were you the beginning of a new breed?

BROWN: There was no cadre of people like this in the EAP bureau. There had been no organizations for them to be working in and developing expertise. Now that's beginning to happen. The current head of the office of Regional and Security Policy, Rick DeVillafranca, had been involved in the early discussion of these regional and security dialogues. There is now a group of people who have been attending these meetings now for almost a decade and they've worked in embassies in the region reporting on host country views of the ARF of issues.

Q: Well, then in '95 you went over to Korean Affairs. Is that right?

BROWN: That's right.

Q: You did that until your retirement in '97?

BROWN: In 1996. I only had the pleasure of working on Korea for one year.

Q: Well, tell me during that one year things were always happening on the Korean Peninsula. What was happening?

BROWN: Well, let me first do the boring stuff. The boring stuff was reorganization. Up until that time, the North Korean nuclear issue had been dealt with by a special task force run by Bob Galucci with Tom Hubbard, the DAS in EAP, as his deputy. They had negotiated the Agreed Framework with North Korea to put a cap on the nuclear activities at Yongbyong research facility. They had established KEDO, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, to implement parts of that agreement, particularly to build two reactors in North Korea to provide power in theory to compensate for the from reactors which the North Koreans had agreed to shut down. This negotiating process with the North had gotten to the point where we no longer needed a special task force, but we did need a group of people who would work on KEDO and the implementation of this agreed framework.

The first thing that we worked out in the summer that I came on board was a reorganization in which six people who had been working under Galucci were transferred to a new unit in the Office of Korean Affairs, EAP/K. EAP/K ended up being the largest office in the EAP with about 17 people in it, six or seven of whom were working on the implementation of the Agreed Framework and the rest were the long standing Korea desk which was responsible for political and economic relations with the South and for analysis of North Korea. It worked out quite well in part because Joel Witt joined EAP/K. He had been in the Political Military Bureau with Galucci and he moved to the Korea desk to lead this unit that dealt with KEDO issues. A lot of what we were doing at that time was getting KEDO up and running and supporting their initial negotiations with North Korea. In this period, the basic agreement on the construction of the new reactors was concluded, through a very tough negotiation. The negotiating was done by KEDO, but the U.S. was the principal founders of KEDO. So our office had a large role in supporting KEDO in the negotiating process.

There was a lot happening on the KEDO front in my time. One example was the canning of fuel rods that had been taken out of the North Korean reactors at Yongbyong. We had a team of three or four employees of the Energy Department at this reactor site along with several IAEA inspectors. They were working with the North Koreans to can this spent fuel and put it in canisters in storage ponds where it would be secure pending eventual removal from North Korea. You can't imagine how difficult it was to support these people from DOE in North Korea, without any U.S. consular or diplomatic presence in the North. For example, each time they went in they had to take dollars in cash because cash was the only payment acceptable to the North. These people had to live at the reactor site where there was no entertainment whatsoever. Inevitably incidents would occur. One Saturday night, one of our people got drunk and spilled some beer on a North Korean newspaper. The paper happened to have a picture of Kim Jong-il, the North Korean leader, on it. The next day our man was accused of insulting the dignity of the "dear leader." So, it took a week to work this out.

When the negotiations between KEDO and the North Koreans would get to an apparent impasse, the North would go into a brinkmanship mode and at times bully our people in Yongbyong. They were threatened with being expelled. Or North Korea would refuse to approve replacement personnel who we wanted to rotate in to relieve those at the reactor site. Then, we would have to persuade those at the reactor site to stay on and figure out how to get some more cash to them.

Q: You were saying how do you work there?

BROWN: Yes, how do you just work collaboratively with people when there has been no basis of mutual experience in collaborative activity?

Q: Whom did you talk to? I mean you're sitting here in the United States.

BROWN: Well, the immediate channel of communication was through the North Korean mission at the UN. We did not have an office in Pyongyang. The agreed framework included a provision for establishing Liaison Offices in each other's capitals but that had not been implemented. We tried to set up the liaison office, but the North reneged on that. So we arranged for the Swedes to act as our protecting power. So, that if our people at Yongbyong ran into difficulties, the Swedish Embassy would represent U.S. interests and help them. Apart from the substantive policy issues being negotiated, there was a constant stream of practical problems to be handled. You never knew what you were going to be running into when you arrived in the office in the morning. What new thing had happened in North Korea that you'd have to deal with?

Q: Were you running into a problem that politically anything dealing with North Korea was seen as a sellout by elements within congress or the press or anything like that?

BROWN: Yes, the Republican led Congress was very skeptical about the North Koreans and the Agreed Framework. That leads me to the second thing that I thought was very important and I still think is very important which directly involved the congress. That was the issue of humanitarian assistance. In the fall of 1995 the North Koreans surprised the world by acknowledging that they had had natural disasters that had created a famine in the North. Pyongyang made a statement that it would be prepared to receive international humanitarian food assistance. This was a very significant departure for a country whose policy had essentially been to close itself off from the rest of the world. All of us dealing with the Agreed Framework realized that unless the North Koreans decided as a whole to open up their economy, it would never be possible to make the reactor project a success. So when North Korea Low announced that they were prepared to accept foreign aid and would accept an international assessment team from the World Food Program, which was seen as very important opportunity.

The question then was how was the U.S. going to respond? In the following months, we went through three steps. The first one was how do we give the standard \$25,000 that the U.S. can hand out in an emergency. Normally, the ambassador has the right to provide this princely sum of \$25,000 on his own authority right away. So, what do you do when you don't have an office or an ambassador? Well, we got the Assistant Secretary to make a determination that there had been a famine and we would donate \$25,000. But as paltry as this sum was, we realized we had to consult with the Hill. We did so without trouble. We also had to consult with Seoul, which was then under President Kim Yong-sam who was a real hardliner on North Korea.

Then when the initial assessments from the WFP came in and the North Koreans were shown to have very substantial needs, we decided to take another step and give them a quarter of a million dollars. We went through the same process, consulting with the South Koreans and with the congress. At this stage questions were raised. How are you going to monitor aid? Is it going to go to the military? We were able to say that we would give the aid through the WFP and that the WFP would have people on the ground in North Korea supervising the way it was given out so that you would know that it was going to children and pregnant women and not the military. It wasn't easy. There were a lot of people who didn't like it, but the law is written in such a way that the Secretary of State has the ability without actually requiring any congressional approval to give humanitarian aid wherever he thinks its needed. The various sanctions on economic ties with North Korea do not apply to humanitarian assistance. The Congress had written this legislation. We were able to proceed.

When the final WFP report came out, this was actually the following spring when the North Koreans admitted they were still having food problems, we went to the Hill a third time for two million dollars of food assistance again through the WFP. We learned some tactics. We were well advised to go to the agricultural committees and figure out which senators and states had excess agricultural commodities that they wanted to get disposed. Arrange a mix of commodities so that congressmen would be happy that their constituent's interests were being looked after. It took a lot of work because you had suspicions in the congress and you had a government in Seoul which was not itself well disposed to giving aid to the North. A very different situation with Seoul than we have today. So, you had to bring the South along because if you didn't bring the South along they would go to the Hill, and the congress would become a much bigger problem, so the whole thing had to be managed very carefully.

Q: What was our reading on Kim Jong-il, his group?

BROWN: He was a mystery. We as Americans had no contact with him. He was still t that time in a period of mourning for his father's death. He dragged this out for three years. It was reasonably clear that he was in the process of trying to consolidate his grip on power in North Korea. He was very much a mystery at the time. He had an image among some as a corrupt playboy. Very little evidence was yet available on how he would act as a leader now that his father had died. He had almost no contact with the outside. This has changed subsequently, but in '95 to '96 he was a mystery.

Q: I take it we didn't have the equivalent Kremlinologists that we used to have and used to sit and talk about who was doing what to whom?

BROWN: Oh, yes, you watch this and the South Koreans watched it even more closely than we did. Who was making appearances, with whom, at what kind of activities? At that time, Kim was almost always at military events. If you look at American involvement with Kim now, I mean Madeline Albright has met him. Other visitors have met him. We've had substantial dealings with North Korea on food aid, on the reactor project, on the agreed framework, on the recovery of remains of American soldiers who were buried in various places in North Korea during the Korean War. We've had the visit of the number two man in Korea to Washington. There have been very extensive contacts with their government. But in the earlier period the only real dealings we had had was in the context of Galucci's negotiations. From that you did know that Kim was, after the death of his father, able to make some sensible decisions. But at that time, no American had met him, talked to him, had any direct contact and in fact very few of any foreigners had had any contact with him.

Q: I've had two contacts one with Korea, one was an airman second class in sitting off Chodo Island, sitting on Chodo Island up in North Yellow Sea and then later as consul general in Seoul in '76 to '79, but was there the perception that an attack could come anytime? I mean, you know, we've had, it's been 50 years now of tension on the border, but except for forays from time to time, the blue house raid and a few other things, its nothing major has happened. What was the feeling?

BROWN: If you went for a briefing at U.S. Forces Korea, they would emphasize the threat posed by the North. They would be able to talk to you about the kind of training the North had been doing and show you the number of new artillery pieces that they believe had been placed in caves along just north of the DMZ. They would talk about our intelligence on chemical weapons and so forth. So, USFK portrayed a picture of the North, which was still consistent with the idea that at some point they might attack the South and try to unify the country in keeping with their propaganda.

At the same time if you looked at the balance between the North and the South, you would recognize that the North's economy had been in decline and for at least five years, that their sources of support in the Soviet Union and China had dried up, that the military looked like a decrepit organization. The North was balanced against South Korea, which was the 11th largest economy in the world. It had just been admitted to the OECD as a member developed world and had an army of 650,000 people equipped with some of the best equipment that the U.S. could provide them, well-trained on their own and with the American armed forces. My judgment and the judgment of others who weren't directly involved in the U.S. forces Korea was that the South Koreans could probably handle the North Koreans pretty much on their own. If we weren't in a confrontation with the North over the nuclear issue, I believed the U.S. really should be involved in withdrawing a substantial portion of the American military from Korea because it wasn't needed anymore.

Q: And it's an irritant within the South Korean society.

BROWN: Yes, a recurrent irritant and we've seen that of course more recently.

Q: I heard your U.S. forces Korea thing. I think it was on MacNeil/Lehrer Report last night.

BROWN: Oh, really? That's right.

Q: How many artillery pieces are there and a picture showing the goose stepping army and how many planes there are and shots of Seoul and how many people and all. I mean the problem of course being that Seoul is within artillery range of the North.

BROWN: Exactly.

Q: So, anything you do would mean horrendous losses.

BROWN: That's right and that's the way I saw North Korea, that it was a vulnerable, fragile state and that Kim's basic concern was to consolidate his own control and that this array of forces north of the DMZ was in effect a deterrent against either South Korea or the U.S. using force against him.

Q: Yes, if you do this I'll blow myself up and you'll get hurt.

BROWN: Right.

Q: Did you get any feeling at that time for something which seems to be a considerable concern on the part of China and that is anything happening in North Korea would mean an exodus of umpteen million poor, starving Koreans into China and this means that the Chinese don't want any change.

BROWN: Yes, you saw that. The Chinese didn't talk much about their bilateral ties with North Korea, but it was pretty clear to us through various intelligence channels that in the early '90s the Chinese had substantially scaled back their aid to the North and done away with friendship pricing on goods sold to the north. Then when the famine occurred in North Korea, the Chinese were clearly beginning to reassess what they were doing vis-à-vis the North. Even though they never gave any aid to the world food program, we were convinced that they became the largest donor to the North of food assistance. They are the principal supplier of petroleum, i.e., energy supplies through Northeast China. The Chinese reversed their policy in '95 and '96 and decided that this famine was undermining stability in the North and that they would have to provide substantial aid to avoid instability.

Q: Well, you talk about it, an awful lot of countries that really despise this regime are doing everything they can to keep it going. The Japanese, the United States, the South Koreans, the Chinese. How about the Russians?

BROWN: They don't have much capability in terms of resources to make a meaningful contribution, but you're right. In some ways, providing aid is repugnant because this regime is as brutal and as inhumane towards its own people as you can imagine. It was and is a government that is prepared to see its own people starve while putting substantial resources into its own military establishment and threatening the rest of the world with weapons of mass destruction. It is repugnant. My view as the director of Korean Affairs was our policy was not to overthrow the regime but to encourage change. I saw the Agreed Framework as a vehicle for encouraging change because, as I said, if the North Koreans were going to implement it through to the end they were going to have to open up their society.

One key issue was how to tie the new reactors into the power grid. The power grid in North Korea was dilapidated. It couldn't possibly handle the power that would be produced by two nuclear reactors. The North Koreans tried to pressure KEDO into agreeing to build a new electrical grid for them as part of the reactor project. KEDO said, no. The way to get the grid is to go to the World Bank. The north didn't like that answer because they knew that would mean they would have to open up their whole economy to the scrutiny of the World Bank. They still haven't agreed to do that, but what we were trying to do was not just deal with an immediate non-proliferation problem, but to bring about fundamental change in North Korean society through the vehicle of the agreed framework. We saw the humanitarian food aid as another way for doing this. We were prepared to invite the North Koreans into the ASEAN Regional Forum. It didn't happen on my watch. It happened later. There were other things we were prepared to do, but the North hasn't followed through on many of them.

Q: It has regressed. What about South Korea itself? The time you were there, how did you view the situation in South Korea?

BROWN: As I said we were dealing with President Kim Yong-sam, who on the one hand was a fighter for democracy, but on the other hand had very negative and hostile approach to dealing with the North at a time when the U.S. was trying to engage the North on a number of fronts. So we had a very difficult time working with Kim administration. We finally cut a deal with him and the deal was this. Kim Yong-sam wanted President Clinton to visit South Korea when he went to Japan in 1996. Clinton worked through Tony Lake who was the.

Q: National Security Advisor.

BROWN: National Security Advisor. Lake went to Seoul with a message, which said, if you would agree to an initiative to get North South dialogue started, the president will come and visit South Korea. This initiative put our office in a tricky position. For reasons that never explained explicitly, the president wanted Lake to handle this relationship through his contacts with Kim's national security advisor rather than having my boss, Warren Christopher, be the point man on this issue. Perhaps Lake wanted some credit for an initiative. Anyways, Lake and his deputy asked our office for some help in drafting their telegrams to Seoul but insisted that we not inform Christopher. Nevertheless, I discreetly informed Winston Lord what we were doing, and got his agreement. My deputy Dick Christiansen, who knew a lot more about Korea than I did, was involved in this process, too. We were writing the telegrams for Lake to send to Seoul to work out the presidential visit.

The focus of the presidential visit was going to be the announcement of what we called the four party peace talks proposal. The Americans and the South Koreans on one side, the North Koreans and the Chinese on the other side. We would start a process of dialogue about peace on the peninsula. This was a cover essentially for finding a way to get the North and the South to talk to each other. All this was worked out without in the end any bad blood that I could detect between Christopher and Lake.

Q: Well, it didn't seem to be the almost priceless relationship that developed with the National Security Advisor Brezinski and Kissinger and all that.

BROWN: No. The dynamic of this essentially was the White House didn't want anyone knowing we were trying to work out this kind of a proposal with the South Koreans because if it fell apart the knowledge that it had fallen apart would further poison North South relations. Lord told Christopher and those who needed to know knew what was going on. We did work out a statement that would be made by the two presidents. We put considerable pressure on Kim not to screw the whole thing up by making an anti-North Korean statement while the president was standing next to him. We agreed on the text of the announcement and on what each of the Presidents would say. To ensure that it would be seen in the North as a serious offer, we insisted that both the South Koreans and we would use our private channels in advance to alert the North that a proposal would be made. The meeting took place on Cheju Island. The president met for about four hours together and announced the four party peace proposal.

Our prior notification to the north was done through the New York office. We gave them a few hours advance notice so they knew what was coming and that it was a serious effort.

Q: What about the Japanese?

BROWN: They were not happy with this because they weren't one of the four. They were U.S. allies, which China was not, and they were paying a billion dollars for the KEDO. They were not happy, but they were told about it in advance and chose not to object publicly.

Q: Well that Japanese relationship ever since the Japanese colonial effort in Korea has always it still, you can't use the Japanese very easily with the Koreans.

BROWN: Though not on my watch, South Korean dealings with Japan have improved rather remarkably in the last five or six years.

Q: Things are moving. I have to say you know, we're right now going through a phase of anti-Americanism all around the world, but as I do these oral histories we're documenting efforts to try and bring peace, reconciliation with all sorts of problems and false starts and everything else. Essentially I can't help feeling that we are a major force for trying to better foreign relations and to have a more peaceful world.

BROWN: While this is a bit off the subject, one of the things that disappoints me most about our policy in Iraq right now is that we seem to be abandoning a lot that we have worked so hard for as a country for four or five decades. We are reverting dangerously to a policy of might makes right. I think it's terribly destructive to our international legitimacy and our ability to do a lot of very positive things by working collaboratively with other people.

Q: Yes. Well, David, is there anything we should talk about on the Korean thing?

BROWN: I don't think so.

Q: Okay, well, it's been a good solid session. We'll stop at this point. Let's see you retired in '97.

BROWN: In 1996.

Q: '96.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Was this a planned retirement?

BROWN: No, it was the up or out problem. I didn't get my promotion to minister counselor, so I was retired.

Q: Well, you certainly had a fascinating go.

BROWN: Oh, I loved it. I would have been prepared to keep going, but none of the things that were offered to me worked out. I was asked if I wanted to be on the list for Brunei, which I declined. I was put on the short list for Director of AIT in Taipei, which I dearly wanted to get. But the job went to Darryl Johnson, a friend and someone eminently well qualified. All the things I thought I'd done that were very meaningful didn't manage to get me promoted or another job.

Q: It's a public relations, I don't know what it is. You watch this. It's a throw of the dice. What about, what have you been doing afterwards?

BROWN: Well, I went to work for Doug Paul who had a small think tank devoted to Asia called the Asia Pacific Policy Center. I did that for two years. In the second of those years, I also picked up a job over here at FSI running East Asia two-week courses three times a year and I did that for three years. In the midst of doing that FSI work I was offered the opportunity to go to work at SAIS in their Asian studies department. I was hired essentially to help them administer the programs, but I've gotten into a teaching role as well.

Q: Just one last question. Do you find the decisiveness of Asia is there a thrust or a theme some people who teach there and all, do they come from various angles or?

BROWN: We have quite a diverse mix of people within the Asian Studies Department. Most of the people there have experience both in the academic world and in government. So, what SAIS strives to do is to combine rigorous academic standards and a practical attention to contemporary problems. We have a rigorous language requirement in our program, strong economic requirements. I think we probably have in the Washington area, maybe in the country, the best area studies kind of program on Asia at the graduate level. The most recent addition being a program on South Asia. We have an Indian scholar who has been teaching in London for 15 years and Walter Anderson who you may know from INR.

Q: Excellent. Okay, well we'll stop at this point. Good.

End of interview